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THE PIONEERS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

THE PIONEERS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

By M. ROUSTAN

TRANSLATED BY FREDERIC WHYTE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HAROLD J. LASKI

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

No people conducts its intellectual controversies more skilfully than the French; and no controversy has been more interesting in the last half-century than the campaign to exalt the seventeenth century in France at the expense of its successor. In part, the effort is the result of the pessimism engendered by the defeat of 1870; men like Taine and Renan saw in Sedan the ineptitude of 1789. For many years it was the fashion to explain that the revolt of which Voltaire is the great symbol was either unconnected with the Revolution, or wholly evil in its results. Men examined the diaries of the period prior to 1750 and found therein the prediction of disaster. They discovered Bayle, and found that he was the source of all that the Encyclopædists had to teach. They examined the *cahiers* of grievances, and found that with hardly an exception they contained no single idea which presumed a knowledge of what the *philosophes* had been saying for forty years. Accordingly, they concluded that the eighteenth century was the least French of all the centuries. The rejection of the dogmas of the Revolution as hostile to the true tradition became itself a dogma.

Twenty years ago, in the book here translated, M. Roustan summarised, with a knowledge as profound as its power of statement was brilliant, the case against the dominant view. He did not, of course, stand alone. That distinguished teacher, M. Gustave Lanson, had for years made protest against the prevailing attitude the main thesis of his instruction. But until the publication of M. Roustan's book there was no accessible volume which explained why even the ability of critics like Brunetière and Faguet, of historians like Aubertin and Rocquain, could not for ever persuade us that the work of men like Voltaire and Diderot, like Rousseau and the Physiocrats, either counted for nothing, or was almost wholly evil.

M. Roustan's book has exercised great influence on French

thought; I remember M. Anatole France telling me that it was the ablest manifesto he had read in years. It does not, however, seem to be as well known as it should be in England, and I do not doubt that many readers will be glad to have its thesis made accessible to them.

Broadly speaking, M. Roustan's thesis is a simple one. It is that, in the face of an opposition as formidable as men have ever encountered, the *philosophes* persuaded their generation of the inherent virtue of free inquiry. The results of that victory were immense; and some of them, at least, were neither expected nor desired by its makers. For it led to the testing of institutions, and it was discovered that the foundations of the *ancien régime* could not survive that test. No one can seriously examine the documents without the sense that, so far at least, M. Roustan has made good his case. It may be true that Voltaire would have hated the Revolution; it is certainly true that without him such a revolution as occurred could not have been. It may be true that, on the balance, it is difficult to see what good the Revolution effected after 4th August 1789; it is certainly true that the *philosophes* convinced the public opinion of France that there was little good in the institutions of France prior to that day. They released those permanent forces of the human spirit which lead men to seek for the realisation of their best selves. Whatever their demerits, that, in the end, is an unperishable service.

One other remark may perhaps be made. M. Roustan's book is not only a brilliant treatise on the influence of the *Philosophes*, it is also an explanation of the Revolution itself. From documents which are available to all, it makes evident the inevitability of the Revolution. It shows that its roots are to be discovered not in the malignant conspiracy of a few wicked men, but in the ultimate nature of the *ancien régime*. That, English readers may be reminded, was Burke's own view of the causes of the Revolution. Popular violence, as he

pointed out, is always due to popular suffering. It has been the hypothesis of a school of contemporary writers that this is untrue, and that 1789 was the work of a gang of conspirators with their hands in every disruptive event. The theory of a hidden hand is popular enough in our time; but until M. Roustan's serried mass of facts has been overthrown it is, in this context, as unproven as it is unnecessary.

HAROLD J. LASKI.

November 1925.

PREFACE

The word *philosophes*, as used by the author and by French writers generally to describe Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert and the other advocates of reform in Church or State who were associated with them, cannot properly be translated as "philosophers." Therefore the French term is retained.

Lanfrey concluded his eloquent—his too eloquent—work, *L'Eglise et les Philosophes au 18^me^ Siècle*, with these prophetic words: "I have spoken of the virtues of this century and of its great characteristics. Perhaps I have said too little about its defects; that is because its defects all came from an excess of power and therefore I feel no reason to apprehend their recurrence with us. They are only too much in our memory, for they have resulted in closing our eyes to its good achievements. There will be plenty of others, besides, to enact the crime of Ham and to lay bare their fathers' nakedness!" Alas! Our fathers' nakedness has been laid bare all too often! Since Lanfrey wrote, we have witnessed a violent and bitter reaction against the eighteenth century, and any observer not in the secret might have supposed that the motives of this campaign lay less in the imperfections or excesses of the writers attacked than in the very spirit of that past which they had so audaciously overthrown and which was seeking to rise up again from amidst the ruins.

In the closing years of the nineteenth century the "philosophy" of the eighteenth was continually being made the object of the harshest condemnations. It is a significant fact that candidates for University degrees regarded it almost as incumbent on them to make an onslaught upon the eighteenth-century writers. M. Lanson[1] protested repeatedly against this fashion; in connection with more than one thesis, he was able to point to some truth falsified or misrepresented by a candidate who, in his anxiety to be "in the movement," had himself accused some *philosophe* of untruthfulness or deceit. M. Lanson did this with much patience, but we can understand how angered he would sometimes become. "Here

[1] M. Gustave Lanson, Head of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris.

we have the outcome of the work of MM. Brunetière and Faguet[1]!" he exclaimed one day. "They have fought—and with good reason—against the idolising of the eighteenth century, but now they have brought into existence a reversed fanaticism which devotes itself to insisting upon the littlenesses and which neglects the greatnesses of the character and work of the eighteenth-century *philosophes*. When will they be studied with the impartial serenity of history?" He would proceed, however, to reflect on the excessive enthusiasm shown by our predecessors as compared with the excessive disparagement indulged in by our contemporaries: "The ship was listing over to one side," he would say; "now it is listing over to the other. Let us right her!" When a twig is bent too much in one direction, the only way to make it straight is to bend it to an equal extent in the other. That is what I propose to do, I may very frankly declare, while endeavouring, of course, not to go to extremes—not to bend the twig too far. I hold, with Villemain,[2] that "the philosophical mission of the eighteenth century was apt to be over-zealous, that it had its imprudent apostles and its spurious proselytes, but that it was none the less great alike in its aim and in its effects, and that its influence transformed French society." I hold, in a word, that the grandsons of the French Revolution have no reason to blush for a school of thought of which that Revolution was the result.

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"You are behind the times!" M. Faguet exclaims on hearing such opinions. "What! You still are under the impression that the spirit of the *philosophes* created the revolutionary spirit and that the men of '89 were the sons of Montesquieu and Rousseau, of Diderot and Voltaire! When shall we be done with this idea that the French Revolution was the work of the *philosophes*—with this so-called 'truth' which is

[1] Ferdinand Brunetière (1849-1906) and Emile Faguet (1847-1916), eminent French authors and professors.

[2] François Villemain, 1790-1870, well known as author and professor; Minister of Public Instruction, 1839-44.

no truth? It is a legend which criticism must set to work to destroy." And M. Faguet sets to work in his *Questions Politiques*, in the chapter entitled "La France en 1789."

And that sets me thinking of M. Rocquain's book, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*, in which the same thesis had been set forth previously; it had evoked a vigorous controversy. I mention it, not to accuse M. Faguet of being behind the times; after all, it would be a matter of only thirty years or so in his case, whereas, in ours, we are accused of being back in the days of the Revolution itself, when the ashes, first of Voltaire, then of Rousseau, were transferred to the Panthéon —the edifice "*consacré à ses grands hommes par la patrie reconnaissante*." [1] Besides, M. Faguet—we shall see that this tribute is his due—is not one of those who take up a thesis without presenting it in a new and original light. If I recall the book in which M. Rocquain sought to prove that the old condition of affairs was already "done for" when the *philosophes* began their unnecessary crusade, it is because the paradox was refuted with vigour by a critic of his own time. The latter demonstrated forcibly that it was vain to think of "denying to the *philosophes* that sway which they had exercised until then"—of taking from them "that preponderance of influence and action in the great revolutionary work." I shall not follow this writer when he, in his turn, traces M. Rocquain's thesis back to that which was developed by M. Aubertin in *L'Esprit Public au 18^me^ Siècle*, published in 1873; five years one way or another is a small matter and, besides, we might be led into going back still further. . . . I shall merely cite the concluding words of that article which was directed against M. Rocquain, as they seem to me to apply wonderfully to the recent work by M. Faguet:

> It would be to falsify history to . . . deny to the *philosophes* the part they took in the Revolution. Let, then, everyone pass what judgment he may please on the *philosophes* and their work, everyone doing so in accordance with his temperament, his interests, or his convictions. But whether, on the one hand, we make of them dealers in errors and lies, or, on the other, apostles of the truth, whether we represent them as human demigods or as Mammons of iniquity, when it would be

[1] Literally: "dedicated to her great men by the grateful fatherland."

so simple to think of them as merely men, greater than ourselves, but, like us, made up of good and bad, they are, and will remain in the future as in the past, the true creators of the Revolution.

These were the concluding lines of an article which appeared, on 15th October 1878, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The eminent critic was to find only too often that his advice was not followed: that, while fanatics persisted in falsifying the truth by denouncing the *philosophes* as Mammons of iniquity, men of high esteem by reason of their conscientiousness in research, their sobriety in judgment and their power in dialectic, renewed the attempt to deny to them the part they took in the Revolution.

And what is the great argument of M. Rocquain when he seeks to show that the *philosophes* were not the creators of the French Revolution? It is that in 1753 the Revolution was on the point of bursting forth: in 1753, that is, before they became really active. We all know what is meant by that: this distinction has often been made between the two great divisions of the eighteenth century and contemporaries were themselves clearly conscious of it. De Rulhière, when he succeeded to the place of the Abbé de Boismont in the Academy, delivered an address which attracted wide attention, in which he drew a picture of the revolution that had been brought about in the world of letters towards 1750, at the period of the *Encyclopédie*.[1] The idea was developed in masterly fashion.

The first revolution, the work of Fontenelle,[2] was reaching its climax; the star of Voltaire[2] was but rising. "He dominated the scene without dominating over our opinions." Already, however, he was beginning gradually to win the suffrages of the French, preparatory to winning those of the whole of

[1] The world-famous encyclopædic work in twenty-eight volumes, begun in 1751, which Diderot (*b.* 1713, *d.* 1784) edited, with d'Alembert (*b.* 1717, *d.* 1783) for a time as his assistant. In it the views of the *philosophes* found expression. It had its origin in the commission given to Diderot by a Paris bookseller to edit an expanded version of Chambers' *Cyclopædia*, but it developed into the immense propagandist enterprise which, as we shall see, was to play so large a part in preparing the way for the French Revolution. The concluding volume appeared in 1765. Voltaire's *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, published in 1770, formed a kind of supplement to it.

[2] Fontenelle, *b.* 1657, *d.* 1757; Voltaire, *b.* 1694, *d.* 1778.

Europe. Montesquieu[1] had published his *Esprit des Lois* and Buffon[1] his *Histoire de l'Homme et de la Nature*. Rousseau[1] "was strengthening in solitude that eloquent voice" which was to set everything on fire; the workers on the *Encylopédie* were grouping round their two foremen. The mind of man was set in motion. "Those deep studies, all issuing simultaneously from out the secluded retreats in which they had ripened, gave forth suddenly new ideas, new lights, new hopes." But at the same time there began "a succession of unfortunate events which, bit by bit, and day by day, deprived the Government of that approval, that public esteem, which until then it had enjoyed. From the love of letters people were turning to the love of philosophy; public opinion, which had begun by applauding, came to condemn; the feeling that all was well changed to apprehension of forthcoming ruin." Book-lovers were adopting a new tone; they began to occupy themselves with the great subjects of public administration, morality, laws, education; they could commend the Government no longer; from having been in the extremest degree flatterers they were growing into the most revolutionary of men. Such was the drift of the passage wherein de Rulhière noted this difference, so often pointed to since, between the first and second halves of the eighteenth century.

Now in 1753 this second period was but starting. Voltaire had not inundated France and Europe with his thousand and one little pamphlets, lively, sparkling, elusive, read with delight and commented upon with eagerness; Jean-Jacques had not given forth his *Discours sur l'Inégalité*; it was only a year since the Government had not hesitated to strike at the *Encyclopédie* by an order in council (it is true that it gave way a few months afterwards); the Du Barry did not yet dream that one day she would make free with the princes of the Royal Family; and the populace had not yet congregated along the road to Chatou to hoot a tthe Chancellor Maupeou[2] after his disgrace. Well, at

[1] Montesquieu, *b.* 1689, *d.* 1755; Buffon, *b.* 1707, *d.* 1788; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *b.* 1712, *d.* 1778.

[2] Nicolas Augustin de Maupeou (1714-92) became Chancellor of France in 1768.

this moment, d'Argenson[1] wrote: "I know from one of the principal magistrates of Paris that the Parisians are in a condition of great excitement; military precautions are being adopted, disturbances are being guarded against, day by day . . . this same magistrate has no doubt but that if the Châtelet[2] were suppressed the shops would be shut and there would be barricades, and that that is how the Revolution would come about." And again: "Revolution is more than ever to be apprehended. If it is to come about in Paris, it will begin by the tearing to pieces of some priests in the streets, perhaps even of the Archbishop of Paris, the populace regarding these ministers of the Church as the real authors of their woes. . . . All orders are dissatisfied at once. . . . Everywhere there is combustible material. From a riot we might pass to a revolt, from a revolt to Revolution, whole and complete, with the election of Tribunes of the people, and the taking away from the King and his Ministers of their excessive power to do harm." In such a state of affairs, it is asked, what remains for the *philosophes* to do? Can one regard them as the authors of a revolution which all but broke out before ever their teachings had had effect upon the mind of the public?

I would, first of all, raise the question whether d'Argenson saw matters aright. In truth, one is astonished when one notices the haste with which historians make use of certain memoirs of the eighteenth century without ever investigating them in a critical spirit. So it has been with the *Mémoires de Madame d'Epinay*, the estimate of which must presently be reduced to the proper value. Perhaps that is what has happened also with the memoirs of d'Argenson. He saw things in an individual way. Did he see them as they were? That is quite another question. We must not forget that d'Argenson was a Minister, placed on the unattached list by removal from his office; we must picture to ourselves the feelings of a dignitary who has been shelved, confronting events which his successors are handling ill or not handling at all; and we must ask our-

[1] Marquis d'Argenson (*b.* 1695, *d.* 1757), *Journal et Memoires*, nine volumes.

[2] The Grand Châtelet, the Court of Criminal Jurisdiction. The building, a fortress on the right bank of the Seine, was destroyed in 1802.

selves if our great-grand-nephews, when seeking to inform themselves regarding our own era, would not do well to hesitate before placing their trust in the observations of, say, one of the Ministers of the Third Republic who, after losing his portfolio, should record every morning that the tocsin of the social Revolution was about to resound and that the land which he himself has no longer a hand in governing is going straight to the dogs.

Let us, however, suppose that d'Argenson had all the vision and all the penetration which have been ascribed to him. It suffices to go through the memoirs to understand how little deserving either of respect or of love the Monarchy was in 1753, how the short-sighted and selfish aristocracy had become to the democracy "*ce que la pourriture est au fruit*," [1] how the populace was exhausted by want. And one does, in truth, ask oneself—supposing that the word "revolution" was not imagined by the Marquis but was really current—why there were no revolutionaries, why the discontented did not pass on from words to deeds. In 1789 the King was not cursed more bitterly, the great were not more despised, the masses were not hungrier.

But the answer becomes at once apparent: in 1789 there will be something in existence which did not exist in 1753, and this something is precisely the outcome of the work achieved by the *philosophes*. Why, as the condition of things, socially and economically, was worse in 1753 than in 1789, did not the revolutionary outburst take place in 1753? The reason is that, however "general" and however "rapid" the change that had taken place, it was not rapid or general enough to transform in three or four years the spirit of the nation, to inculcate into it the idea of its rights, to give it the invincible force which comes from the feeling for freedom. D'Argenson had noted correctly how the wind of "anti-Monarchism and anti-Revelation" was blowing, and that it came from England; it would have to blow for some time in France before prejudices and abuses could be shaken down. The work was achieved in 1789.

The clearest proof of this is that there were riots and that

[1] Literally: "what rottenness is to fruit."

none of them had the effect foretold by d'Argenson. In 1750, the people having been persuaded that their children were being taken from them for transportation to the colonies, belaboured the minions of the law, killed some of the police,[1] attacked the commissaries in their own homes, and made ready to sack the mansion of Berrier, the Lieutenant of Police: a few detachments of the so-called *gardes françaises* were enough to produce calm. Between 20th January and 20th February 1753, eight hundred poor wretches died of hunger in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. At Rennes, at Bordeaux, in Languedoc, in Guyenne, in Auvergne, in Normandy, there were riots; troops were dispatched and all was over. At Rouen, the convents were invaded, the boats laden with grain were set on fire, houses were pillaged. The *Jacquerie*[2] came to life again in the provinces; thousands of peasants forced their way into *châteaux* and held the occupants to ransom. "One might believe oneself to be in 1789," remarks M. Soury in his *Portraits du 18^me^ Siècle*: "then the people will not be suffering worse things; but feeling no longer the bit or the curb it will throw the rider whom it has carried so long and will break away, madness in its eye, its mane flowing wild in the wind, and will sink in some bog, never again to rise, its limbs shattered." The metaphor is not exact. It is the rider who will shatter his limbs, not the horse. But how comes it that M. Soury, in face of what he writes, can remain of the view of M. Rocquain? The people felt the bit and the bridle in 1753; we do not deny that: it did not feel them any more strongly in 1789; that is perfectly true. The fact is that in 1753 the right hour had not yet come. For well-nigh forty years the *philosophes* were to be educating the nation; they were to teach it that it was made up of men, they were to teach it how to reason things out. The moment was to come when it would no longer be possible to quell a riot. Logically, fatally, the riot was to become a revolution.

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[1] Members of the police force of that time.

[2] An expression applied first contemptuously to rebellious French peasantry by the nobles in 1358.

IT is so true that the *philosophes* had but entered on their task, so true that they seemed to have only made a beginning, that at this date the religious party was able to indulge in hopes of stemming the movement, and that a formidable effort was set on foot with a view to wiping out the new doctrines. There has been too great a tendency to make little of the dangers which menaced the *philosophes*. I do not refer to writers who have denied those perils altogether—they have done more than go astray; they have gone astray wilfully. "The heretic," so Bossuet had declared, "is the man who has an opinion." "All opinions," said Voltaire, "are absolutely unknown to morality; one should be a good man whether the Saints be twice brought to life again, or whether God brings them to life again only once." To have an opinion is to be heretical; to have none is to be tolerant. The one thing is as much to be blamed as the other. "Under Louis XVI.," wrote M. Brunetière, "toleration, in so far as it consisted of admitting indifferently 'all kinds of religion,' was still ranked as an act of blasphemy and, as such, held punishable, if need were, by burning." So much for religious affairs; now for affairs of State. In 1746 there was issued a royal decree suppressing the right to discuss questions of government, of administration, or of finance, the right, in a word, to publish any kind of political writings. The Abbé Morellet [1] protested, to his honour, against this condition of things in his *Réflexions sur les Advantages de la Liberté d'Ecrire*. The Controller-General wrote with his own hand on the margin of Morellet's manuscript, "To speak of this administration, one should have one's tail in the pot, one should be inside the ink bottle" (the worthy official mixed his metaphors), "and it is not for an obscure scribe, who often has not a hundred crowns to his credit, to lecture the men in power." An original argument against the liberty of the Press!

I shall not recapitulate the obstacles which the laws and the institutions had set up in the way of the writers of the eighteenth century. Moreover, we must recognise the fact that the

[1] *B.* 1727, *d.* 1819, one of the Encyclopædists.

philosophes broke through these bonds without much difficulty, that they had protectors who showed themselves all-powerful and accomplices who exerted great influence; and that, indeed, they seemed to display redoubled boldness after each show of authority against them, every such show of authority being followed by its withdrawal. If more than one book had the honour of being burnt, no writer was accorded the palms of martyrdom. But it was no small matter to be conscious of a whole arsenal of laws, decrees, proclamations, which at any moment might be drawn upon. The opinion of the Controller-General of Finance was that of more than one among the enemies of the *philosophes*. In 1769, when *Bélisaire* appeared, the Comte d'Artois, at that time a boy of ten, exclaimed that it was a nice state of affairs when a Marmontel ventured to address lectures to kings, and he declared that if he were master he would have the writer flogged publicly at the four corners of Paris.[1] "And I," replied the Dauphin, who was thirteen, "if I were king, I'd have him hanged!" And we may be sure that the two boys were re-echoing merely what they had heard from others. I doubt whether such remarks were much of an encouragement to Marmontel! There was no recourse to arms, it is true, but the arms were handy and the thought was not a reassuring one.

Now, some years after 1753, the arms very nearly came into action. The clergy had been organising resistance against their enemies. They had exhumed a law of 1563 which condemned any man "who had printed a work against religion" to be hanged by the neck until death should ensue. The Church and Parliament and the royal power joined forces.[2] Crusaders came forth from every direction: Abraham Chaumeix, "*vinaigrier et théologien*," as someone styled him; Moreau, the lawyer; Père Berthier; Boyer, the Bishop whom Voltaire has immortalised

[1] Marmontel, *b.* 1723, *d.* 1799. A chapter on toleration in his most famous work, *Bélisaire*, aroused violent anger.

[2] In this paragraph, as elsewhere in the volume, the translator has omitted some passages which, unless annotated very fully and elaborately, would convey almost nothing to the English reader: passages of no particular interest in themselves and not essential to the context.

under the title of *L'Ane de Mirepoix* and whom he portrayed in *Zadig* as Yebor; Palissot; Fréron, whom M. Ducros in his fine work on the Encyclopædists calls "a good pupil of the Jesuits"—which is no crime—and M. Ducros adds, "who remained so all his life"—which is no compliment; and so many others like the Abbé Trublet, who also owes his fame to Voltaire: Père Hayer, the Franciscan, who, with a stout heart and still stouter lungs, composed *La Religion Vengée* in twenty volumes; and so many others. It was now that a chevalier of the Bastide exclaimed: "*Qu'est-ce qu'un 'philosophe'?*" A *philosophe*, he went on to declare, was an impertinent fellow behind whom lurked a bad man: "In our own interests we ought to drive out of society anyone who has the effrontery to bear the name." This lucubration occurs in a work entitled *Les Choses comme-il-faut les Voir*.[1] Nor must we forget M. le Marquis Jean-Jacques Le Franc de Pompignan[2]: we must not think that he was in no way dangerous just because he was absurd. Favart[3] wrote to a friend: "M. Le Franc goes so far as to flatter himself it was he who expelled M. de Voltaire from the Academy. . . . MM. Duclos,[4] d'Alembert and many others would no doubt be included in the reform as Encyclopædists. In this case, they would take in some Capucines to recruit the French Academy." And Quesnay[5] spoke more than once to this effect: "I applaud Voltaire for his hunting down of the Pompignans: the bourgeois Marquis, were it not for the ridicule he has provoked, would have been tutor to the royal children and, together with his brother George, the result would have been that they would have been brought up butchers." To which the publisher of the *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* added: "Nothing could be more unjust than this supposition. M. de Pompignan, a virtuous man, charitable

[1] "Matters as we should see them."

[2] Jean-Jacques Le Franc, Marquis de Pompignan, author of *Didon*, a tragedy, and of *Poésies Sacrées*, *b.* 1709, *d.* 1784.

[3] Charles Simon Favart, poet and dramatist, *b.* 1727, *d.* 1792.

[4] Charles Pinot Duclos, author of *Considérations sur les Mœurs*, *b.* 1704, *d.* 1772.

[5] François Quesnay, *b.* 1694, *d.* 1774, the economist and founder of the school of thinkers known as *Les Physiocrates*.

and animated by the true spirit of religion, was incapable of any kind of persecution." To which I in my turn reply: "Nothing could be more unjust than this defence." It is to be believed that Voltaire knew well what he was doing when he floored the Marquis and settled accounts afterwards with the latter's brother, Aaron. One is stupefied by Pompignan's insolence in regard to Malesherbes,[1] Director of the Librairie, a man of good character, one of truly liberal mind, for he favoured freedom of the Press alike for the *philosophes* and against them—for Voltaire and for Fréron.[2] Now Malesherbes was reduced to defending himself against the accusations of Pompignan in a *Mémoire* in which he used these weighty and impartial words: "It does not follow, because the encyclopædists are blameworthy in many respects, that their adversaries ought not to be subject to any law." After that, the suspicions harboured by the Church regarding Malesherbes were redoubled, and in 1765 the clergy unmasked their batteries: "We are nearing the fatal moment," they declared in an address to the King, "when the *Librairie* will ruin the Church and the State. It would be just and wise if the *Librairie* were submitted to our inspection and if we were given a share in an administration which it is of great importance to us to save from abuses." There is no need of commentary. Here we have Voltaire's justification in his struggle against Pompignan and against those who behaved like Pompignan; here, too, we have evidence that the *philosophes* in 1753 not only had not yet armed the minds of others, but that they had their work cut out to save themselves.

Fortunately for them, all the men of talent were on their side. The Abbé de la Porte met with the following experience one day. He had first been working under Fréron; a disagreement had broken out among the company of his associates. The Abbé conceived the idea of composing a review of Fréron's news-sheets; he drew up a list of the authors in Fréron's pay

[1] Malesherbes, *b.* 1721, *d.* 1794, a Minister under Louis XVI. A Director of the *Librairie*, he was a kind of censor of printed publications of all descriptions.

[2] Elie Fréron, *b.* 1718, *d.* 1776, a great opponent of Voltaire and of Voltaire's associates.

and compared them with the succession of writers whom the journalist had belittled. The result was striking: in the one list were all the "daubers of paper," in the other the leaders in the world of letters. In 1753 the success of the *philosophes* was as yet more than doubtful. Face to face with the "daubers," they were now to unite and form line and take the offensive. In 1789 they will have far behind them their triumph over their opponents and will have grouped an entire people round a certain number of guiding principles; it will have become impossible for the Revolution not to break out and I declare in conclusion that the Revolution remains the work of the *philosophes*, whatever M. Rocquain and M. Faguet may have thought about it.

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IT was M. Faguet who revived the opinion in question; he reinforced it with the help of documents of the first importance with which he had been furnished by M. Edme Champion in his very valuable book, *La France d'après les Cahiers*[1] *de* 1789. One thing which struck M. Faguet was that all the *cahiers* were unanimous in demanding only reforms of an economic and administrative order. "The principles of 1789?" M. Faguet exclaimed. "There are none! The men of '89 no more thought of Liberty than they did of Equality. . . . Those who drew up the *cahiers* were merely dying of hunger and merely wanted to stop dying. . . . The French Revolution, in the desires of the men who began it, as well as in the results in which it ended, was purely an economic and administrative revolution." Consequently, the *philosophes* had had nothing to say to it; the principles of 1789 date from 1830; there is not a single echo of the encyclopædists in the *cahiers* of the three orders of the State!

Perhaps it is a bit hasty thus to affirm that there is no echo of the principles of the *philosophes* to be met with in any of the *cahiers*. Certain of those which have been published contain other things besides demands for economic and administrative

[1] The word applied to memorials of grievances addressed to the King.

reform. There was, for instance, the address to the King contained in the *cahier* of Langres. . . . Those who composed it had, without a doubt, read Montesquieu and Voltaire and they show it. This fact noted, we may admit that M. Faguet is right in his general contention: one is astonished at the difference between the starting-point and the various stages—at the rapidity of the progress from aspirations which after all were modest to radical reforms. We may agree that the men who formulated the memorials showed as a rule but little regard for great principles.

In the first place, even if it be concluded that *la philosophie*[1] had nothing to say to the memorials, this cannot be said of the *philosophes*: for I ask you, what man of letters was there in the eighteenth century who did not deal with economic and administrative problems? Secondly, the reasoning is specious. *Cahiers* are *cahiers*—memorials are memorials, and the Revolution is the Revolution; they are two very different things. If you want to find the great principles of *la philosophie* in 1789, you will not have to go far to find them. It will suffice to turn to the Declaration of the Rights of Man which was promulgated in October of that year. Now, if we have changed or sought to change many things, no one will attempt to prove that this Declaration was anything but a juridical *résumé* of the theories of the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century: here we have at once the principles of 1789 and the men by whom they were inspired.

And if we ask why the memorials were so timid and the deputies so bold, the most elementary knowledge of political psychology will furnish the reply. It was natural that in his little provincial corner the peasant should be prudent and circumspect; it was inevitable that, once he found himself in the National Assembly, the majority of whose members were animated by the spirit of the *philosophes*, the provincial deputy should begin to think of other things than complaints about commissaries' agents and excisemen and that he should

[1] The French word is left here as it would not be quite correctly rendered by the English word "philosophy." Occasionally, although not in this sentence, it is translatable approximately as "school of thought."

devote his mind to plans for a new Constitution based upon new principles. The influence of the *philosophes*, moreover, was not fettered by the restraints which weighed—and which always weigh—upon the political projects of the hour; but for that, the deputies would have ventured only to petition for reforms; with that, they were buoyed up with sufficient civic courage to swear that they would not separate before they had given a Constitution to the country.

It is vain to keep repeating that the only motive which guided the men of 1789 was the desire to escape death by hunger. Death by hunger! Why that had been part and parcel of the national tradition! The populace had been dying from hunger normally, habitually—it was the regular thing, and anything else would have astonished them. They did not die of hunger any more in 1789 than in 1753 or in 1709. We shall have countless proofs presently of this. There was no reason why that should not continue after 1789. No reason save the one: the fact, namely, that the *philosophes*, having worked for the freeing of men's minds, had driven it into the brains of all their fellow-citizens that they were free men, and that among their imprescriptible rights they possessed that of founding a Society in which these rights would not be for ever sacrificed. The citizens came to realise that their ills were not of Divine institution and were not inherent in a condition of things decreed by Providence, but that they resulted from a series of iniquities which it was now time to stop. They began to repeat —without always understanding it, I am prepared to agree— the *credo* of the *philosophes*; what came home to them was the reflection that nothing was happening in accordance with reason and justice, and that it rested with themselves, the people, that things should go in accordance with reason and justice. Thenceforth, they were no longer content to bow their heads. Enlightened by the *philosophes* regarding their wrongs, they righted these wrongs. Enlightened by the *philosophes* regarding reforms, they built up as soon as they had finished pulling down. The *philosophes* always were the initiators. They furnished both the weapons and the principles. And, therefore, were I asked to define their spirit, I would reply, without hesitation,

in direct contradiction to M. Faguet: "The spirit of the *philosophes* was the spirit of the Revolution."

* * * * * * * *

I SHALL abide, then, by the time-honoured opinion and shall continue to think that our eighteenth century deserves our admiration for the reason that its writers were the designers of our modern world. How did they design it? How did they employ the various forces of the nation for the task upon which they united? I shall try to show. But it seemed to me well, first of all, to make clear the spirit in which I have composed this work and to set forth clearly my convictions. I should be happy, indeed, if I could communicate these convictions to the readers of my book.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND ROYALTY	27
II.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE FAVOURITES	70
III.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE NOBLES	102
IV.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE MAGISTRATES	116
V.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE FINANCIERS	144
VI.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE *SALONS*	177
VII.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE BOURGEOISIE	197
VIII.	THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE PEOPLE	227
	CONCLUSION	287
	INDEX	297

I

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND ROYALTY

The English have produced in one of their theatres a common sort of farce in which the French, as personified in a street-porter, are held up to ridicule. This porter is carrying on his back a heavy load of clothes, indispensable garments of various kinds. Someone who meets him inquires: "Where are you going?" "To the royal treasury." "What takes you there?" "Carrying this load." "Here, carry mine there also!" "But I can't, you see I am crushed down by the weight!" "Carry it you must, in the King's name and for the King!" A second person appears and asks the same questions and goes through the same procedure. Then a third comes and a fourth; the porter sinks under his burdens and drags himself forward with difficulty towards the royal treasury. Horses come upon the scene, splendid equipages, men covered with gold, and there are shouts of "Here comes the King! Long live the King!" The poor porter, almost at his last breath, turns his head in that direction and cries out at the top of his voice: "Long live the King!"

This anecdote from the second half of the eighteenth century tells us a good deal about the feelings of the French towards the monarchy. The France of that period presents the spectacle of a nation which is daily losing respect for the King without losing anything of its respect, or perhaps of its love, for royalty.

We must understand aright those words of d'Argenson's, so often cited: "In Paris people are more Republican and more genuine"; that means that in the great city people are more independent and censorious, more disposed to criticise the people in power, and that in Paris a man will be less concerned lest he should be seen in public with his mistress. It has to do with something quite distinct from the feeling of democracy. I know that there are many passages in his writings in which d'Argenson has all the appearance of a pure-blooded Republican. But if his memoirs had been read by his contemporaries, who could doubt but that the passages in question would have seemed curious and amusing day-dreams, imaginings more vaporous even than those of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre,[1] and less dangerous, assuredly, because they owed more to the caprices of sheer imagination. Conceive what

[1] *B.* 1658, *d.* 1743, author of a famous book in which he embodied a scheme for the securing of permanent peace throughout the world.

would have been thought in the full flood of the eighteenth century of a vision of a kind of a Swiss republic, with a system of provincial and communal decentralisation, which should enable the human ant-heap to produce abundance, a sort of better-governed, because less-governed, Holland! Who would have taken such a Utopia seriously? Besides, the federal republic, as d'Argenson pictured it, was to be placed in the hands of the traditional protectors of the French nation, and the successor to Louis XIV. was to be the sole guarantor of all these liberties. A strange formula indeed—no republic without the monarchy! Such was d'Argenson's idea, and one day, when he had been carried away by his theories of equality to subversive lengths and asked himself "if it would not be time soon to abolish all political power in the world," he pulled himself up and, quite amazed at his own inconceivable audacity, exclaimed: "That is a paradox worthy of the English!" (Not of the English but of anarchists.) "Let us leave to them that fashion of reasoning; let us respect the authority under which we were born, but let us sorrow over seeing it debased by agents unworthy of it" (which was mere opportunism). This declaration is sincere and it does not astonish us in a man who had written: "The royal authority is a religious dogma" (a sentiment natural to a devotee of royalty). "Who would dare," he asked on another occasion, "to talk to the French of allowing themselves to be led by any other power than that vested in a monarch?" To this question the answer is quite simple: no one would have dared to do so, not even the Marquis d'Argenson, who gave his pen its head in his secret memoirs, but whose monarchical faith, in spite of all vicissitudes, hesitations and doubts, remained living in the depths of his heart.

How could it have been otherwise, seeing that the nation, for centuries past, had been moulded by the powers of royalty? As in all periods of transition, we shall find, doubtless, a certain wavering in the eighteenth century; at every step one is conscious of oscillations between the reminiscences of a past which even to-day has not completely disappeared, and an independence of thought which even to-day is not completely emanci-

pated; between the respect inspired by century-old traditions and the potent attraction of seductive novelties. Now, among the legacies of old France, the one which nobody even dreamed of even questioning, was that of devotion to royal authority: the people from time immemorial had obeyed this authority, bowing down their heads to it and not daring to look it in the face. The respect and affection inspired by the person of the monarch, sacred and revered, and the almost divine family which constituted the dynasty—"It is only natural to love a House which has reigned for 800 years"—so it seemed to Voltaire, and to his entire century it seemed so too.

Add to this the prestige exercised, in spite of everything, by the century of Louis XIV., whose foreign policy and home policy are equally anathematised by the men who castigate the ambitions of conquering princes and the intolerance of despots, but whose glory acclaimed by the leader of philosophic thought evokes a cry of involuntary admiration. We may support the opinion which gathers strength from day to day that Royalty helped to promote the emancipation of the people and paid it in kind for its loyal and faithful services. In a conversation reported by Madame du Hausset, a good-looking young Master of the Court of Requests[1] declared in the presence of Quesnay and his friends:

> This love of the French for their King is not blind; it is a deep feeling and a confused memory of great benefits. The nation, and I would even say all Europe and all mankind, owe their liberty to a King of France—I forget his name; it was this King who instituted communes and who gave a civic existence to an immense multitude of men. I know that it may be said with truth that he served his own interests by enfranchizing them; that they paid him dues, and that, finally, he wished in this way to weaken the power of the great and of the nobility; but what does all this signify? That the operation was at once useful, political and humane.

This young Master of the Court of Requests was to make his name in history; it was he who would have saved the royal power if it could have been saved and whose efforts served only to prove that an enlightened despotism was not to be

[1] A legal dignitary of high position.

counted upon to regenerate France: his name was Jacques Turgot.[1]

"This century, which was to finish with a regicide, began, one may say, with an act of faith and love towards the ancient royalty, with a generous forgiveness for faults committed, and if the crime remains without excuse it is right to remember and to trace in the hatred which broke out in 1793 the indignation of a love shamefully betrayed." So expresses himself M. Aubertin, and with justice. It is difficult to find in history a king who was more "madly" loved (the term was employed by contemporaries) than Louis XV.

Everything combined to make the nation adore him. There lacked none of all the treasures of David, and the frail Joas seemed to have escaped but by a miracle the fatal destiny which carried off mysteriously, one after another, the members of the royal family. One might imagine that a great blow was dealt against the respect for the royal family on the day of the interment of Louis XIV. "I cannot recall without horror," the Duc de Richelieu wrote long afterwards, "the disgraceful conduct of the people of Paris on the day of the funeral of their sovereign. The death of the most odious tyrant could not have afforded more pleasure." The "disgraceful conduct" has been made known to us by a crowd of witnesses, but it should not make us conclude that there was any weakening of the feeling for royalty. Whilst on the Saint-Denis road, along which the coffin went, there was laughter and drinking and singing, and all kinds of insults were offered to the dead body, the Parisians were going forth with tears in their eyes to welcome the arrival of the little King of five years old whom they were bringing from Vincennes; the child was so handsome, despite his sickly and melancholy aspect, that all arms stretched out towards him, while acclamations went up on every side, mingled with tender and respectful words for the sole hope of the country. Garbed entirely in clothes of a violet hue, and seated upon the knees of his governess, Madame de Ventadour, he gazed, pale and agitated, at the human flood which rolled

[1] *B.* 1727, *d.* 1781, Minister of Finance under Louis XVI.

along past the coach, and when a halt was made for refreshment opposite the Porte Gaillon, the Duc d'Orléans pointed out to him this crowd united in love for their prince, and told him to salute. The boy saluted with his hand, to right and left with a sweet smile, and all were ravished with his grace and beauty.

The affection of the people increased in proportion to their anxiety as to the boy's life: never afterwards were they to forget the anguish which their hearts caused by those words—*la santé du roi*. At the first hint of danger there was a universal rush for news. Breathless, terrified, the people went hither and thither, repeating ugly rumours, whisperings of poison, going so far as to name the suspected murderer, the Duc d'Orléans, who assuredly did not deserve the dreadful calumnies of which he was the object. The authors of the memoirs of the time are continually on the alert for the slightest indisposition of the King and, when the danger is past, their hopes revive and their joy is overflowing. One of the most stirring manifestations of this love of France for the royal child took place in July 1721. On the 13th of the month the Prince had a high fever; "his head began to trouble him," Duclos[1] tells us, "and the frightened doctors began to lose their heads themselves"; his doom seemed sealed, Paris was in consternation and all France with it; the whole of Europe looked on, perturbed; Helvetius, father of the famous *philosophe* (who was then a boy of six), alone maintained his calm; against opinions of all the consultant physicians, against the very lively opposition of the first surgeon, Maréchal, who swore "if there were only one lancet left in France he would break it rather than operate this blood-letting," Helvetius, then quite young, recommended boldly the letting of blood from the King's foot. There was a period of hesitation, and famous doctors were sent for from town; Helvetius began by convincing these, and then, in the tones of a brave man not afraid of shouldering responsibilities, he addressed the others and insisted on the performing of the operation. It succeeded. An hour passed and the fever

[1] *B.* 1704, *d.* 1772. One of the best-known writers of the period. Author of *Mémoires secrets sur les Règnes de Louis XIV. et de Louis XV.*

diminished. Five days later the King was up and received the compliments of the assembled guests and of the foreign envoys.

Let us listen to Duclos, who witnessed the transports of enthusiasm which followed on the part of the populace:

> All the churches, in which for five whole days only cries of grief were to be heard, now resounded with *Te Deum*. . . . There was dancing and junketing in all the streets; the bourgeois had their evening meal served outside their houses and invited the poor to partake of it. Every family in Paris seemed to be holding a banquet every day. This spectacle continued for two months of beautiful weather and only ended when the cold came in after the season was over. The foreigners took a share in our joy and the Emperor said out loud that Louis XV. was the child of all Europe.

Louis XV. was "the child of all Europe"; with his cherished existence were bound up not only the happiness and security of France, but the preservation of universal peace. Duclos recounts that by a secret clause in the Treaty of Rastadt, the Emperor had given his word to the late King that throughout the minority he would not enter into any coalition, directly or indirectly, against France. It is clear that the boy's death was dreaded because of the conviction that it might be the signal for a foreign war, which would add to the horrors of a civil war.

However, the boy grew bigger and became robust. Passionately fond of bodily exercise, he perfected himself in the art of fencing, and his dancing-master made him into the most graceful dancer of the entire Court. His moral education was less thorough, his mental education quite inadequate: it is to be supposed that fears were entertained of tiring a delicate brain. Little by little, however, he acquired all the outward gifts; in 1722, when he was crowned at Rheims, there was a chorus of laudations of his beauty: "The King was of a charming countenance," wrote d'Argenson: "it is recalled how like a figure of Eros he looked on the morning of his coronation at Rheims, wearing his long coat and his silver cap, his costume of a neophyte or a candidate for the throne. . . . I have never seen anything so moving. . . . One's eyes became moist with tenderness for this little prince, escaped from so many of the dangers of early youth, sole survivor of a numerous family." The remembrance of the anxieties attending his childhood

still persisted, one notes. "Bodily, he was so perfect and so accomplished at the age of seventeen," says Richelieu, "that he was reputed the handsomest youth of the kingdom. Nature had forgotten nothing either in details or in the *ensemble*." Louis XV. had only to appear in public for all hearts to go out to him, and his very presence seemed a boon to the nation.

No resentment was felt against him, therefore, on account of his inaction just at first; after the Regent, the Duc de Bourbon, and then Cardinal Fleury, performed the duties of King. No matter: the people waited with confidence; it was convinced that at the death of Fleury Louis XV. would take the reins in hand, and it said to itself that if he had not already done so the cause was to be found in his commendable deference towards his aged mentor. . . . Gratitude was felt towards the Minister for his wise and prudent policy, and he was condemned for being timorous or over-cautious; the young monarch would give the reign the greatness and glory which were lacking to it as yet, and it would be all to the honour of the Cardinal to have left to his pupil the merit of being the initiator of fine hopes and vast ideas. Therefore any feelings of impatience were soon appeased and people were content to note trivial details which encouraged the expectation that the work of regeneration would be the King's own. The young King's utterances were quoted and discussed: "We have no news," declares a gossip of the time, "apart from the King's comment on *L'Histoire d'Henri IV.*, which he has just read." He was seventeen and had been two years married: it is never too late to know the history of one's family. He was asked his opinion upon it and he replied that "*tout ce qui lui aurait plu d'avantage dans la vie d'Henri IV., c'était son amour pour son peuple.*" [1] The remark was not a very profound one nor very original; it sufficed, however, to buoy up people's trust in a future more glorious for our arms and more beneficial to our race.

In 1743 it was time that Louis XV. should really mount his throne. The public had waited long enough; the spectators had reached that point of impatience at which the arrival on

[1] Literally: "that which would have pleased him most in the life of Henry IV. was his love for his people."

the stage of the leading character, long heralded, is welcomed with a unanimous feeling of relief and with universal applause. The Cardinal did not make his exit soon enough; he had remained in the limelight a trifle too long and he had begun to weary people, with the result that they were no longer feeling so grateful to him for what he had done and that their thoughts were concentrated upon the closing scenes in which he lagged on so mistakenly. The country, turned upside down by the Regent, lowered in its prestige by the Cardinal, was feeling the urgency of the coming of its regenerator. Behold him as painted by Vanloo, young, as handsome as a god, generous, stately, unrestrained in aspect, with something in his air at once gentle and martial, bearing himself like a fearless soldier and a gallant gentleman; his delicately embroidered sleeves cover a portion of his breast-plate, and the gracefully curving scarf half hides his sword; on the table, upon which lies his helmet, suggestive of some legendary hero, may be seen a small figure of a cupid standing beneath some rich hangings adorned with *fleur-de-lys*, a chubby little cupid ready to take wing past this young paladin who, his right hand resting on his *bâton*, his left hand placed on his belt, seems to stand there prepared for the evidences of admiration on which he has the right to count. . . . The people do in truth break out into enthusiasm; there is a universal sensation of delight and upon all lips we hear the same cry which we shall find presently in all the memoirs: " At last we have a King! "

For several years to come it was possible to believe still that France really had a King. Louis XV. seemed disposed to take his mission seriously; he began by studying, listening to advice, working hard, acquiring some of the knowledge which he ought to have possessed long already. In addition, he gave proof of qualities which are innate rather than to be acquired, courage and wit—qualities which win many hearts in France. I need not recall his appearance at the head of the army in 1744, how he conquered the affections of the troops in Flanders, and how, on hearing the news of the invasion of Alsace by Charles de Lorraine, he hastened away to the town of Metz in order to cope there with the danger that was most pressing.

As for his "sayings," they were all collected, for it was the century in which *bons mots* were so much esteemed and in which they effected so much. Some of his sayings, in truth, were very well turned. When efforts were made to restrain his impatience before he started for the front, and it was pointed out to him that his *suite* was not yet ready, he replied: "I can dispense with fine trappings, and if need be, I can put up quite well with the shoulder of mutton of the infantry *sous-officiers*."[1] That was almost worthy of the "Little Corporal." Here is another saying, of a more boy-like, more familiar, sort. They were trying to dissuade him from rushing to the frontier of Alsace: "Am I to let my country be gobbled up in this way?" he exclaimed in resolute tones. At Metz he fell ill and he made an observation to the Maréchal de Noailles which recalls the manner of the *Grand Monarque*: "Remember that while they were carrying Louis XIII. to the tomb, the Prince de Condé won a battle!" These phrases became historic; perhaps even the winning of a battle would not have done so much for the popularity of the young King!

I shall not retell the story of the King's illness at Metz; this time it really did seem that Louis XV. was doomed. What a feeling of desolation pervaded the whole of France! The country was plunged in grief and despair at the thought of the youth struck down at the very moment when he was about to prove himself the greatest of military leaders and the bravest of men.

One reads in the memoirs of the period how in Paris they treated the couriers who brought tidings, how the couriers who had to say that things went ill were assailed with abuse, while those who had good news to tell were carried shoulder-high in triumph. At last the miracle happened. The King was out of danger! A cry of joy went forth from all hearts, the churches were filled with multitudes offering up thanks to God and a tremor of happiness passed through the nation on its emerging from that memorable phase during which its aspirations towards fortune and glory had almost vanished.

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[1] Non-commissioned officers.

The King, on recovering his health, had only one thought—to quit a business which had now come to weary him. His few months' activity had been really of a fictitious kind. To do a king's work properly one must love it; now Louis XV. had no taste for the occupations which had confronted him. "The King's greatest malady," remarked Pidansat de Mairobert, in *L'Observateur Hollandais*, "is the *ennui* which afflicts him, which forces him to be always moving, and which impels him to keep wandering round and round in a narrow circle of a dozen country-seats which he visits continually in succession." That was most true. Later there were to be years in which he did not spend fifty nights at Versailles. The key to this character, so differently read, is surely to be found herein: Louis XV. was a man never-endingly bored. When he was with the army in Flanders, Madame de Châteauroux[1] joined him there and efforts were made to distract him. In vain! The King made the round of the outposts and went down into the trenches, but his thoughts were elsewhere. The people about him "wound him up" again, to use a perhaps vulgar phrase, and he had a few occasional moods of high spirits which misled them, but it was not difficult to perceive that this would not last long—that this fire would soon go out. The monarch needed something to keep him stirring, but it did not do for his activities to be restricted in any one direction; there is no need to look elsewhere for reasons to explain the lack of perseverance in his conduct or of ordered system in his policy or in his personal and individual views. His one idea was to distract himself, and the performance of his duties was no distraction for him—it was a burden and a nuisance. What he wanted was a succession of diversions that were not occupations. And so we find him abandoning sieges and trenches and outposts and getting back to Paris. "The King is doing nothing to-day," the courtiers had got into the way of saying when his Majesty was not *à la chasse*. The King had been "doing nothing" for some months. It was time for him to return.

His arrival now in the capital was in the nature of a grandiose

[1] Marie-Anne de Mailly-Nesle, Duchesse de Châteauroux, *b.* 1717, *d.* 1744.

demonstration: no one who witnessed it was ever to forget it. Louis XIV., coming back victorious from his wars in pomp and triumph, had never been accorded such an enthusiastic reception. "A fine spectacle," writes M. Houssaye in his *Louis XV.*: "The King was handsome and he had just saved France." That, at least, was the belief and the public gratitude found expression in ardent good wishes and heartfelt blessings. Louis XIV. was a Jupiter, superb and majestic, inspiring profound respect; Louis XV. was an Apollo, incomparable in his harmonious grace and all arms were stretched out to him as toward a tutelary god. A *grand seigneur* threw among the crowd a handful of coins so that they might drink to the health of the Sovereign; the crowd did not stoop to pick them up, the money was trampled under foot. All the crowd cared for was to see the King!

The King's glory was to go on increasing further; his captains were to win immortal victories. At Noailles, almost disgraced after a whole day of reverses, a success was to be scored by an adventurous Saxon, Marshal Saxe,[1] the "Wild Boar," as the town dandies called him, a natural son of a king, born in mystery, to meet his death no one knows how, coarse and ostentatious—a man to be kept back by nothing, not even the gout which kept his body prisoner though it could not interfere with the activity of his mind: Fontenoy (11th May 1745) remains a historic date in the history of our military achievements. The King, who had come to rejoin the army with the Dauphin, had run a great danger, it was said; Marshal Saxe had thought for a moment of making him recross the Schelde—he feared an irreparable defeat. The result was a victory which the poets were to celebrate to perfection. The following year the King was present at the taking of Brussels, Antwerp, Mons, Charleroi and Namur, and Maurice de Saxe won the victories of Raucoux and Lawfeld, which were to be followed by the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).

This date marks the highest pitch of Louis XV.'s popularity. He had taken an honourable part in the military operations;

[1] Maurice, Comte de Saxe, *b.* 1696, *d.* 1750, son of Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland.

he had done better still, he had said a thing about his triumphs which told of his hatred of war and love of peace. The battle of Lawfeld is memorable less by reason of the rôle of Maurice de Saxe or of the valour of his troops than by reason of a speech of the King to Ligonier, a general in the English army and his prisoner. "Would it not be better," the King asked, "to think seriously of peace instead of causing so many brave men to perish?" Cardinal Fleury's pupil seemed rather to have been trained by Fénelon.[1] The Danish engineer, Lowendahl, captured Berg-op-Zoom, which the Dutch thought impregnable. Madame de Lowendahl, having come to visit the Marquis, Louis XV. welcomed her as the wife of a hero and said to her: "Madame, the whole world will benefit by this conquest. I give to your husband the *bâton* of Marshal and I hope to deliver my subjects from the scourge of war." Télémaque was wont to talk in this fashion. Peace!—that was what the young King wanted at any price, even if he had to sacrifice the legitimate advantages which he had but to demand in order to obtain. He would give up Belgium, two Dutch provinces with Berg-op-Zoom and Maestricht, Genoa, Madras; what mattered to him 100,000 soldiers lost, 120,000,000 francs expended? The English got out of it very well. They gave us back the little island of Cap Breton—that was all they had taken from us. The King declared formally that it was his intention to treat in the matter not like a merchant but like a king.

He treated like a simpleton: six days sufficed to bring the negotiations thus conceived to an end. Télémaque, it is true, was able to achieve a peace of this kind with the Dauniens, but Télémaque had behind him Polydamas, whom he imposed upon his defeated enemies as their prince, knowing that this king "understood war but loved peace." England had Newcastle and Pelham, she was about to have William Pitt, whose supreme aim was the destruction of our navy and of our colonial empire. George II. bore no resemblance to Polydamas,

[1] François de Salagnac de la Mothe Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, *b.* 1651, *d.* 1715. Famous especially for his *Fables* and for his idealistic prose epic *Aventures de Télémaque*, in which he gave indirect expression to his views on the government of France under Louis XIV.

and yet he was made a present of all our conquests so impetuously that we forgot to demarcate the boundaries between French and English possession. This meant a new war for the morrow. Meanwhile Louis XV. was giving the French people military glory and with it peace abroad; the acclamations broke out afresh and in the midst of the splendid *fêtes* of Versailles the Sovereign, in the eyes of the nation, appeared the most magnificent and the most liberal of kings.

This then, was the culminating point, as it were, of the reign of Louis XV. Contemporaries felt clearly that the moment was a decisive one. "We have attained our goal," wrote d'Argenson at this date, "and we have weakened our enemies and broken the greatness of the House of Austria. Finally we have peace. If only the King continues to take big views of things, if he chooses good advisers, and if he is able to put a plaster on the ulcer, his reign will be a very glorious one." That was the view of a former Minister who, as I have pointed out, had numerous reasons for discovering that all was going as badly as possible under the most incapable of his successors. Later, glancing back, the memoir writers did not hesitate to establish between the two parts of the reign an essential line of separation, marked by the year 1748. "Louis XV.," we shall find the Duc de Levis declaring, "had also an epoch of brilliancy and glory; the victories of Marshal Saxe were won in his presence and under his auspices; and the generous, perhaps excessive moderation which he showed on the occasion of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, had made him the idol of his subjects. . . . But these feelings changed totally during the last years of his reign."

"Totally," is too strong a word. There are very many indications that the change was not so radical or, at least, so sudden. In 1751, for instance, the King had a fall while out shooting; he grazed slightly his arm and his head, and his gun bruised his thigh. The people of Paris, who, we are sometimes assured, were so dissatisfied already with their King as to employ the phrase "*Tu es bête comme la paix!*"[1] as a very

[1] Literally: "Thou art as stupid as the Peace!"—the second person singular being used offensively.

violent insult, showed themselves ready to enact all over again the madly enthusiastic scenes of 1721 and 1744: "The King is wonderfully well," writes Madame de Pompadour, "he has been five hours out hunting on his horse in spite of his bruises. The Parisians have taken it into their heads to go cracked and, in truth, I do believe it would be difficult to find in the entire universe such a master." (At this period, the concluding words of the sentence made, indeed, a compliment of a somewhat equivocal kind). . . . But, notwithstanding all this, the division adopted by contemporaries and accepted still to-day is, on the whole, quite correct: before 1748 Louis XV. was his people's idol; after 1748 he was criticised to begin with, then despised, then execrated.

If Louis XV. had had it in him to regenerate France, he would have regenerated the royal power simultaneously and have ensured it a long existence. It was open to him to do so —nothing could have been easier. He had the confidence of the nation; better still, he had its love. Louis XIV. was only "the great King": Louis XV. was "*le Bien-Aimé*."

In the concluding years of the reign it was to be felt that this title "was accorded too soon," but at the time there was no dissentient voice—the "*Bien-Aimé*" was the undisputed master of all hearts. The task before him looked easy and the difficulties of a kind easily overcome. Those difficulties, indeed, were not yet as great as they were to become in the course of some years. The term "*la philosophie*" still signified an opinion only, not a sect. Free thought was still an opinion only, not a watchword: it exercised no definite political influence; the combatants of the morrow were still without leaders, without a plan of campaign, without rallying cries. There was, of course, parliamentary opposition and Jansenist opposition, opening two breaches through which the troops of the innovators could later pass, but these breaches might be repaired. There was yet time to prepare for all the impending perils and, faced by a horizon whereon a few clouds scarce did more than veil lightly the blue of the sky, it was possible to dream of tranquil and fortunate days; the rainbow which shone out resplendently in that year 1748 seemed to presage

peace after disorder, calm after the storm and life-giving sunshine after the rain.

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IT is childish then to reproach the *philosophes* for having shared the sentiments of the whole nation and for having celebrated the "Well Beloved" enthusiastically in prose and verse.

To realise the injustice of those who quarrel with the men of the new school of thought for not having withstood the universal infatuation over the King, one ought to be familiar with the way in which from 1740 onwards the towns and provincial districts of France vied with each other in erecting monuments to his glory. "There was not a town of importance," wrote Grimm in 1760, "which did not wish to have a bronze statue of the Sovereign." Bordeaux, Rennes, Valenciennes, Nancy, Rheims, etc., outdid each other in this direction. Alone, in the midst of an entire people, giving proof of a kind of mysterious prescience, the *philosophes* ought to have protested against all this enthusiasm, ought to have made themselves the interpreters of posterity, ought to have condemned Louis XV. coldly and impartially—for his future faults!

It would seem as though even some of those who have appreciated the *philosophes* most justly have wavered a little in regard to this matter. Barni, the author of *Moralistes Français au XVIII^me^ Siècle*, who is, generally speaking, full of sympathy for the eighteenth century, shows a certain impatience with Vauvenargues, who declared in 1744 that he did not regret the reign of Louis XIV. and preferred that of Louis XV. "Unfortunately," declares Barni, "Louis XV., under whom Vauvenargues lived, was certainly no better than Louis XIV., and our moralist was 'wrong' to make him the subject of a formal panegyric.'" This means that "our moralist was wrong" not to blame Louis XV. for turpitudes which he had not yet committed and for sharing the opinion of all his contemporaries without any exception whatever. Barni, indeed, is prepared for this reply: "It is true," he proceeds, "that at the time this monarch seemed to deserve the esteem and affection of his subjects, who were soon to call him the

Well-Beloved. The shameful events of his reign occurred only later, when Vauvenargues was lying in his tomb." That is but the truth, but then one ought not to write that Vauvenargues was " wrong " to praise Louis XV., or if one wrote it, and if the real truth of the matter at once occurred to one, one ought to have withdrawn the reflection and not blamed Vauvenargues.

In the same way Voltaire concluded thus his *discours* [1] to the French Academy: " Would that I might see in our public places this humane Monarch sculptured by the hands of our Praxiteles, encompassed by all the symbols of public happiness! Would that I might read at the foot of his statue these words which are in our hearts: To the Father of the Country!" Could anything be more unjust than to make it a crime in Voltaire to have expressed these academic sentiments? . . .

The year following, it was Duclos who, on the day of his reception by the Academy, delivered himself of a panegyric of the King.

" He regards victory as a misfortune for mankind," he said, " and in the title of hero he sees only the cruel necessity of being a hero in truth. The interest which he takes in men proves that he is made to command all. Little affected by the glory of his successes, he bemoans the evils of war; a master himself in the art of warfare, and born to the rôle of leader, he is not dazzled by it; he fights, he triumphs, yet his wishes are for peace. Sensitive, grateful, worthy of, and capable of, friendship, at once a King and a citizen, qualities so rarely combined, he loves his subjects as much as he is loved and his people is made for his heart."

This was in January 1747. Our successes were a year old, the enemy was held at bay; in vain the English would presently be making appeal to the Russians, in vain the Dutch and the Austrians would make a final effort; they were to be forced to bow before a King whose magnanimity they were ready to admire provided they could turn it to account. At every moment Louis declared his distaste for the war; of his responsiveness there were oft-told illustrations: " Ah!" he

[1] *Discours* is the word applied to the speech made by a new member of the Academy on election and also to that in which he is welcomed.

exclaimed at Metz, " how sweet it is to be thus loved! And what have I done to merit it?" Maurice de Saxe and others bore witness to his sense of gratitude; of his love for the people there were proofs in abundance: this Citizen-King, once peace was achieved, would be giving all possible care to the welfare of the public. Duclos does but reproduce the feelings graven upon all hearts, free from all courtier-like spirit and entirely sincere. A year later, on Friday, 21st February, he was to proceed to Versailles with twenty-two of his colleagues of the Academy, and in the gallery of the *château* to present to the Sovereign the warmest of congratulations on the conclusion of the peace. In 1750, the year when his *Histoire de Louis XI.* was printed in Paris, the King appointed him his historiographer. Dedicating to Louis XV. the second edition of his *Considérations sur les Mœurs de ce Siècle*, Duclos said to him:

> All writers make haste to depict the hero and the peacemaker of Europe; mine will be the additional advantage of being in a position to make known the virtuous King, the prince to whom mankind is dear. In order to pay to your Majesty the due tribute of praise, I have but to hearken to the voice of fame and truth. These are my guides and safeguards; the eulogy of a great King has to be the history of his life.

This cannot rightly be regarded as a mere act of prudence, a mere " politic " precaution—the word is Barni's. We would not, indeed, blame Duclos if, in order to win immunity from the storms which the clergy and nobility would be able to raise against him, he had thought it wise to place his work under the patronage of Louis XV. This would have been but good tactics. This explanation, however, is not called for. The " hero," the " pacificator of Europe," the " virtuous King," the " prince to whom mankind is dear "—these were the titles which " the voice of fame and of truth " was really at that moment according to Louis XV. There is nothing in all this to astonish us—no toadying, no flattery. Nor was there any great show of courage and independence in the affirmative: " The eulogy of a great King has to be the history of his life." This also was a mere statement of fact: the record of the life of Louis XV. constituted, in truth, a fine eulogy; only it was to be heard in 1750, and from the mouths of his contemporaries.

It is time, therefore, to set things right. There is neither a courtier-like nor a calculating spirit in the commendations passed on Louis XV. by the *philosophes* in the course of the first part of his reign: it was neither to attract his favours nor to avoid the vengeance of the persons of power attacked in their works that the boldest writers displayed their admiration for the King. This admiration of theirs was sincere—they shared it with the whole of France. . . .

Before dealing with this second part of the reign, before taking note of the feelings which the *philosophes* later were to have for the King, it was well to put on record the feelings which they had for him down to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle and to show that they could have had no other feelings and that they do not deserve in this respect either censure or approbation.

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M. AUBERTIN thus defines the two periods of the career of Louis XV.: "In the one Louis XV. is the hope and the beloved of his people; in the other he sinks down by degrees and drags down the royal prestige with himself into the revolution of contempt." We shall see that this last affirmation is far from being substantiated and that the royalist sentiment was not destroyed by the disastrous spectacle of our external and internal policy between 1756 and 1774.

We shall not follow in the footsteps of the many others who have already described those years: the best-informed historians and the most erudite scholars have accomplished this task, and where they have worked there is very little left to glean. Neither the historians nor the scholars have been able to agree among themselves as to the responsibility of Louis XV. for the misfortunes which overwhelmed France and as to the degree in which he really merited the chorus of imprecations that have been raised against him.

It remains a question [writes the Maréchal de Beauvau[1]] whether Louis XV. was extremely idle or extremely modest. He treated public affairs lightly and did not much apply himself to them. He often showed much common

[1] *B.* 1720, *d.* 1793.

sense and he was never disputatious; he always had recourse in council to an appeal to the majority of votes and it was a misfortune that his advice was not more often taken. He willed sincerely, but without much strength, the welfare of his people.

A very favourable appreciation, on the whole, and one which sanctions the attributing of all the King's faults, not to incapacity or lack of conscience, but to his weakness and his lack of will: such an explanation excuses nothing in the King's conduct, but it illuminates everything. Unfortunately for his fame, however, there are other witnesses who refute this view. "At the Council, he could be made to sign his own condemnation," wrote, on 12th May 1744, Cardinal de Tencin [1] to the Duc de Richelieu [2]; at this date we have to note that Louis XV. was showing a degree of energy looked for from him later in vain. From his own admissions, one may deduce conclusions opposed to those of Beauvau: "There are reports from Bavaria, dated the 13th [December 1742], but I have not seen them," he wrote on 23rd January 1743. The Sovereign had remained for three weeks without having the curiosity to make himself acquainted with the news of the war. If we were to make a collection of anecdotes of the time, how many such examples of the "prodigious indifference of the King" we should be able to include! How many remarks are put into his mouth, justifiably or not, which show that he had come little by little to be considered a totally incapable King and even an entirely unintelligent man as he advanced in age and indulged more and more in excesses!

These anecdotes, of course, had their currency and we can understand how they contributed to the formation of occasional hard judgments on a King who showed himself more and more unequal to his task, according as, through his own fault, the difficulties to be coped with became more numerous and more complex. Since those days it is natural that people should have come to exaggerate and that Louis XV. should often have had attributed to him the lowest degree of depravity and imbecility. A reaction in his favour has come about, however. Writers have pointed to his elegant ways and his charming

[1] *B.* 1679, *d.* 1758.

[2] *B.* 1696, *d.* 1788.

conversation as evidences that he remained a man of attractive and distinguished mind all his life. His secret correspondence with the Comte de Broglie, above all, has been relied upon in support of this contention, and it has been shown that the King gave his attention to matters of both internal and external policy, even spying on his Ministers and endeavouring to undo secretly what his representatives had done. . . . The idea has been thus created that Louis XV. has been extravagantly calumniated. This idea seems to us to be correct, but between such an acknowledgment and the extravagant claims that have been put forward for him there is a wide gulf and a gulf which does not seem to us to have been bridged. . . .

The real truth lies between the two views and, for my part, I subscribe to the opinion of M. Carré, which is as follows: " Louis XV. seemed to assist at his reign as at a play, a barely curious, barely interested spectator. One can almost imagine him yawning at the unrolling of its events as at an opera at the *Petits Cabinets*. . . . We shall never find him anything else than a sceptic, an intellectual dandy, impassive in his statuesque and kingly beauty."

I am surprised only that M. Carré in this same book, *La France sous Louis XV.*, should be able to affirm a few pages earlier that the King brought to his rôle " more conscientiousness than was commonly believed." What kind of " conscientiousness " could be brought to any kind of task by a " sceptic," an " impassive, intellectual dandy "? It is true, as M. Carré might reply, that so absolute a lack of " conscientiousness " is sometimes attributed to Louis XV. that this measured phrase is no panegyric. Let us leave it at that! . . .

Besides, in view of the theme of this book, what is essential for us is not to decide in what measure Louis XV. deserved the evil repute attached by posterity to his name. We should be quite content to say that he was a bad ruler and to add, after Joubert, that the punishment of bad rulers is to be thought worse than they really were. What is important for us is to see how Louis was judged by his own time, and above all, to explain how it came about that the contempt called

forth by him did not tell against the monarchy itself. That is necessary in order to elucidate the relationship between the *philosophes* and the royal power.

Now if Louis XV. came to be considered by nearly all his contemporaries a shameless debauchee and sometimes a shameless money-grubber, at least those who were not prevented by blind hatred from appreciating the better side of him noted two facts: first, that he knew how to save, at least in part, the outward pomp of royalty: "The pains he took to maintain its dignity," Levis declares in his *Souvenirs*, "prevented Louis XV. from sinking into degradation. Thus he performed at least the more important task of a monarch, that of making royalty respected." This remark is true. The very courtiers who got drunk with their master did not lose, even at the height of their orgy, the respect they had for the royal authority. . . .

In an anonymous letter addressed to Louis XV. and preserved by Madame du Hausset, we read:

> I will say that Your Majesty ought to make yourself more popular. . . . Then there will be a personal feeling for you, instead of our attributing everything, evil and good alike, to your Ministers. There is a proof of natural confidence on the part of peoples for the King in such a cry as: "Ah! if the King knew about it!" They like to think that he would right everything if only he were informed.

The anonymous writer, it is true, deduces logically from this the following irrefutable reflection:

> But, on the other hand, what kind of ideas are formed of kings, whose task it is to be informed about everything and to keep their eye on all that happens and who yet do not know the things it is of most importance to them to know if they wish to fulfil their duties.

The eighteenth century in general did not draw this conclusion. It went on repeating with conviction: "Ah! if the King knew about it!" without adding that the first duty of the King was to know. One is tempted, at first sight, to attribute to a mere consideration of tactics the way in which the representatives of royal authority are so often taken to task by the independent writers, the Sovereign himself being left out of their attacks. It is difficult, no doubt, to argue that the

philosophes without exception never saw that they were weakening the royal power in overwhelming with their criticisms those to whom its powers were delegated. But they are generally sincere when they distinguish between the King and his Ministers, and victimise the latter while commending the former—or else commiserating with him for being unaware of the abuses and injustices which dishonoured his reign. . . . Contemporaries go so far as to admit that the King is not to blame if the good laws are not enforced, and they seem to believe quite seriously that the executive power belongs not to the absolute monarch but to the irresponsible commissioners whom he has selected. At the death of Louis XV. there was found in a small chest a kind of testament of which the memoirs of the period speak; it was, as the Abbé Baudeau says in his *Chroniques Secrètes*, a regular confession by the King of the harm he had done his people through the fault of his Ministers —so it runs more than once. The scene of the reading of this testament was grotesque and saddening. The document was read out in public by the Duc de la Vrillière who, imperturbably, his glasses on his nose, recited to the new King the "*par la faute de mes ministres*," and every time this refrain recurred, those present became convulsed with laughter: the comedy would have been very droll had it not been the misfortunes of France that constituted the background to it.

It is difficult to say at what period the nation began to detach itself from its King and to see him in his true colours or worse. I do not think that we ought to pay any attention to the alleged premonitions of revolution which are to be met with here and there in contemporary writers. So far back as 1727, Mademoiselle Aissé [1] wrote to a friend: "Everything that happens in this kingdom seems to foretell its destruction," a remark which resembles that of Madame de Tencin [2] to the Duc de Richelieu: "Unless God visibly interposes His hand it is impossible for the State not to crash!" These are merely pessimistic outbursts, to which no one will pay attention. I

[1] *B.* 1695, *d.* 1733. A lady of Circassian origin who became famous in the literary circles of Paris.

[2] *B.* 1685, *d.* 1749, Sister of the Cardinal.

prefer the sally of Pope Benedict XIV.: "Do we need further proof of the existence of a Providence than the sight of France prospering under Louis XV.?" And there is more truth in this remark, for our country is not held to have been decadent in the eighteenth century and even when Louis came to be detested as intensely as he had been adored, there was to be no despair either of royalty or of France.

If proof unquestionable of this be wanted, it will be found in the fact that Louis XVI. on his accession to the throne was made the object of the same enthusiastic demonstrations as his predecessor; moreover, people began to count on him to remedy the evils caused by Louis XV., and the warmest eulogies of his virtues alternated with the bitterest criticisms of the deceased King. The authors of comedies went too far in their panegyrics of Louis XVI. at the expense of Louis XV. One piece was suppressed in which all the vices that had surrounded the throne of yesterday were represented under the features of Terray, Maupeou, d'Aiguillon[1] and the Duc de Richelieu, while one character in it was made to exclaim, speaking in the name of the whole people: "*Vive Dieu! Les Français ont un Roi!*" The French had uttered the same cry at the death of Fleury. There was never to be a day without the manifestation of enthusiasm for the Queen, for the King's brothers, for all the members of this family to which the country felt itself so closely bound. The period of bliss, no doubt, was to be briefer, as the *philosophes*, without attacking the King or the royal power, had taught French citizens that they were "men"—had taught them to reason. But the first moments of the reign were to be greeted with the same cries of joy and hope which had welcomed the first years of the "Well-Beloved."

A very lively royalist feeling, then, persisted, despite everything, until the death of Louis XV., and it was this that prevented or delayed the explosions of public hate against the Sovereign. It is in vain that one separates the person of the

[1] The Abbé Terray (*b.* 1715, *d.* 1778) was for a time Finance Minister under Louis XV. The Duc d'Aiguillon was closely associated with him and with Maupeou.

King from the kingly power: in proportion as one retains respect for the monarchical authority one hesitates to curse its representative.

The memoirs of the period contain a certain number of facts which enable us to see how the people fell away gradually from the King. According to some chroniclers the rupture was effected in 1750.

> It was [writes Mouffle d'Angerville] the terrible period when (after the riots in Paris and the construction of the *Chemin de la Révolte* from Versailles to Saint-Denis, to prevent the King from having to pass through the capital when going to Compiègne) the ties of love between the Sovereign and his people began to weaken. One no longer saw Louis XV. return to Paris except in all the trappings of his severity and of his anger; one no longer heard the people bless him with those acclamations of joy which were so flattering to the ear and the heart of a good King.

It would seem, indeed, that it was the people who were the first to execrate the King whom they had loved so much. That was quite natural. They had had so much confidence in their ruler. The greater the hope, the more painful the disillusion. From this period onwards sinister rumours began to spread among the simple and the credulous—rumours echoed by the gossips: "It is said that Louis XV., like a second Herod, was about to repeat the Massacre of the Innocents," etc., etc. D'Argenson affirms that at the time of the attempt on the King's life by Damiens "the good bourgeois showed much grief, but that the people remained mute." A year later, on the other hand, a bourgeois of Paris was accused of sedition and of having written placards attacking the authority of the Sovereign. A sanguinary execution took place; it did not intimidate—placards in greater numbers were put up next day. If we want an exact scale of the King's decline in the respect of his subjects, we shall get it in the following calculation: "In 1744 payment was made in the sacristy of Notre Dame for 6000 Masses for the recovery of Louis XV.; in 1757, after the attempt on his life by Damiens, the number of Masses asked for was only 600; during his present illness it has sunk to 3"—that was his last illness. It was the people who turned against Louis first; then the bourgeois; then the nobles. . . .

I shall not dwell upon the insults which rained down upon the King and his Court from 1750 onwards. Suffice it to recall the famous song which met with such success and which was composed on the occasion of the King's departure from Choiseul:

> Le bien-aimé de l'almanach
> N'est pas le bien-aimé de France. . . .

Nor need we linger over the lamentable scenes which attended the King's funeral. The coffin was placed upon a *carrosse de chasse* [1] and jutted out in front; it was driven at top speed. "The personages of his escort made the dead man keep up the same pace they had forced upon him while he lived. Never was a monarch led along so swiftly." The same unseemliness was kept up along the roads to Saint-Denis. The *cabarets* were filled with people drinking and singing; there were shouts of "*Taïaut! Taïaut!* [2] *Voilà le plaisir des dames! Voilà le plaisir!*" One man, more dramatic than the rest, apostrophised the corpse: "*Va t'en salir l'histoire!*" In Paris there was the same licence in songs and jests. . . . There was no curbing them. "If I were to arrest people for jesting," declared M. de Sartines, the chief of the police, "I should have to arrest the whole of Paris." Such was the apotheosis of the successor to Louis XIV.! Just as he had been more adored than *le grand Roi*, so he was more violently insulted in his last hour. Both kings had funerals which were unforgettable, amidst maledictions and cries of joy, while France did not know whether most to execrate their memory or to rejoice in her own deliverance.

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WERE the *philosophes*, speaking generally, among the first or the last to fall away from the King? The answer can be given without hesitation: they were, of all French subjects, the most unshakeable in their monarchical faith and the most respectful towards the King, even at the period when it was no longer possible to cherish illusions about him. It has

[1] A rough kind of cart used for bringing back game after a day's shooting.
[2] "Tally-ho!"

frequently been noted that they occasionally showed the King a deference which would be astonishing if we noted it without looking for any explanation. The simplest explanation is the one most generally accepted; it will be found in M. Brunel's book, *Les Philosophes et l'Académie au XVIII^me^ Siècle*. A *philosophe*, he tells us, was *mal noté*—looked at askance; it was to his advantage, therefore, for him to be regarded as a faithful subject, a particularly faithful subject. The *philosophes* were indifferent when Pompignan denounced them for "undermining the altar"; but when he added, "and the throne," they became angry, for this charge was unfounded. It would be only sensible and natural on their part, therefore, to be profuse in evidences of their faith in the monarchy and their affection for the King.

This explanation does, indeed, contain a good deal of the truth. The philosophers secured by these concessions in the field of politics the right to carry on their task in the field of religious and social life. But it does not contain the whole truth, for it tends to give us the idea that it was only from diplomatic motives that the *philosophes* acted thus, whereas there is no lack of proof that their conduct, however tactful and dictated by necessity, was not in contradiction with their private feelings.

Not that Louis XV. personally showed any great consideration for the *philosophes*. . . . He showed less consideration for them than Louis XIV. He even thought it absurd that they should be suffered to sit at his table. He laughed at the notion—acceptable though it might be in Prussia—of a Voltaire at supper with a King.

The Encyclopædists, however, did not really need the active patronage of the King; all they required was his neutrality; and Louis XV. was in this respect the ideal Sovereign for them. His attitude of indifference served their purposes excellently.

For that they were grateful to him. Turgot, indeed, as reported in the *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, went so far as to claim that the reign of Louis XV. would be for ever famous for the progress made in science and philosophy; while for that good, simple-minded, affectionate devotee

Quesnay, the King, besides being the best of masters, was the most enlightened of monarchs.

Louis XIV. [he wrote] loved poetry and was a protector to the poets; that perhaps was a good thing in his time, because a beginning has to be made; but this Century of ours will be a greater one and it must be admitted that Louis XV., sending astronomers to Mexico and Peru to measure the earth, presents something more impressive than the regulating of operas. He has opened the barriers to philosophy, despite the outcries of the devout, and the *Encyclopédie* will honour his reign.

Here and there, indeed, I have come across anecdotes which attribute to Louis XV. a tolerance all the more admirable that it cannot be explained merely by indifference, as, for instance, when he was attacked by Diderot in the *Essai sur Sénéque*:

The prince [we read in *La Chronique Scandaleuse*] expressed his annoyance to the principal director of the *librairie*[1], who put a stop to the sale and had the passage looked into. He then presented himself before the King and admitted that the portion of the book was dreadful and that the author was very blameworthy. "Very blameworthy," the prince agreed. "But have you read the whole work?" "No, Sire," he replied, "I have read only that passage." "Read the whole," continued the fair-minded and beneficent monarch, "you will find in it excellent things which quite make up for the author's misdemeanour and I am very ready to forgive him."

In any case, the reign of Louis XV. was the reign of *la philosophie*. This came to be more fully realised when it was over, and it was not merely the *philosophes* themselves who recognised it. The benefits which were due to them were admitted even by those who had accused them of extravagance and exaggeration. The Duc de Levis, for instance, in his *Souvenirs et Portraits* remarked: "Even those who foresaw the inevitable troubles awaited events with more of curiosity than of terror." France, it was felt, was safe now from sanguinary disputes. Religious fanaticism had disappeared entirely. The worst to be apprehended was some *Fronde*,[2] analogous to that of the previous century, and in any case civilisation,

[1] See foot-note [1] to p. 16.

[2] The term *Fronde* was applied to the civil war which took place during the minority of Louis XIV. between the party of the Court, headed by Anne of Austria and Mazarin, on the one side, and the *Parlement* on the other. Hence the word *frondeur*, which M. Roustan uses elsewhere.

humanity and philanthropy had made such astonishing progress that " if it came to blows, the civil war would be waged with more urbanity than ever before." There was no one who did not look forward to better times for France and in particular for himself.

The chief cause of this new state of mind, according to the Duc de Levis, was the way in which *la philosophie moderne* had spread throughout the whole country, advancing side by side with education. The Duke held that the effects of this philosophy were often nefarious and yet he admitted that it had also helped to conduce to fortunate results: to a love of peace, to the development of agriculture, navigation and commerce, to progress in the sciences and the arts, in astronomy and mathematics, to the increase of the general welfare, better-built houses, more comfortable carriages, better-kept roads, cleaner and more numerous inns. Then there was less etiquette and less ceremony at Court, easier manners in good society, better taste and greater naturalness in conversation. There was less of caste feeling, too, among the classes, they had come nearer each other and the old humiliating boundary-lines between them were being gradually effaced: " public opinion, in accordance with philosophy and humanity, condemned these vestiges of barbarism." Louis XVI. was to abolish *morte-main* and *villeinage*—the entire feudal system was beginning to disappear. . . . The great nobles themselves looked for less respect and coveted admiration rather for their personal merits than for their high birth: " Side by side with the philosophy which lost its way in the dangerous labyrinth of metaphysics, the spirit of humanity, that philosophy of the heart, distributed its gifts with more activity and discernment. It availed itself of the progress of the arts to multiply its benefits. Without being more virtuous, people had become more charitable; the acts of cruelty and oppression of previous epochs were becoming more and more rare; the laws would have put them down if public opinion, stronger than the laws, had not forbidden the mere thought of them."

The picture, of course, is exaggerated. De Levis admits as much himself and he proceeds to add that there were still

abuses, wickednesses, intrigues, corruption. He urges, however, that "France was then agitated without being wretched." His words help us to understand the attitude of the *philosophes* towards the monarchy. They undoubtedly had counted for a good deal in the progress of civilisation; and if they had been able to contribute towards the improvements in question, was it not owing to the relative freedom which they had enjoyed under the rule of Louis XV.? Why should they have felt inimical to a monarch who, without actually favouring them and assuredly without attempting to understand their doctrines, had left them free to deliver their message to the nation?

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LET us suppose now for a moment that Louis XV. had not recovered from his illness at Metz or that he had died from the blow of Damiens' dagger—would the *philosophes* have been able to achieve a triumph so rapid and so complete? The Dauphin would have mounted the throne. They had lived in dread of this eventuality. It was largely indeed because they feared the Dauphin that they wished sincerely to see Louis XV. live. . . .

Very different views, of course, have been expressed regarding the Dauphin's character. Lanfrey writes:

> The Dauphin, so loved by the clergy, who saw in him the incarnation of their own ideas and the coming realization of their hopes of revenge, would, with his narrow, limited but rigid and obstinate mind, have presented upon the throne, and under the ward of a confessor, the very model of a persecuting King. All the hatreds, all the rancours, all the hopes of the party which had triumphed during the last years of Louis XIV. were rallied round him, and through being surrounded by flatterers representing these forces he had become their living embodiment. . . . The idea of his reign, it must be admitted, held forth a not very reassuring prospect to the Encyclopædists.

M. Carré, on the other hand, thinks that the Dauphin was neither so unintelligent nor so intolerant as he has been painted:

> The Dauphin [he writes] was undoubtedly a prince who never concealed his repugnance for the *philosophes*, but he was, nevertheless, a well-educated man. . . . While quite young, he had taken pleasure in singing psalms because he had a bass voice and this was enough to give him at Court the look of one extravagantly pious. The pious party, moreover, sought to make of him their

chief, the defender of religion and the protector of morality. There is no evidence that he lent himself to their plans as regards religion; nor is there any that his own code of morals was very high.

These two judgments, which I have chosen because they are so diametrically opposed, agree nevertheless on one point: the Dauphin detested the *philosophes*. The latter, being fully aware of the fact, felt that the death of Louis XV. would be an irremediable blow to their party. As to the Dauphin's piety, there was no doubt about it, and it was assuredly no crime. Even the *philosophes* did not make it a grievance against him that he fulfilled his duties as a Catholic regularly and even punctiliously. But it was enough that he should have given the impression of having it in him to be "a persecuting King" for those who were fighting against the "pious party" to foresee in him a danger, and there is no doubt that Lanfrey's view of him prevailed at the time. "M. le Dauphin," we read, "continues to display much piety. He is reproached with making too much external show of it as, for example, by prostrating himself down to the ground at the moment of the elevation of the Host at Mass or Benediction. . . . Madame la Dauphine begged him one day not to worship the Holy Sacrament like a monk." These are the words of a fervent Catholic, a partisan of the Jesuits, an enemy of the new thought, a man full of respect and awe of the King and the Royal Family, the husband of the Queen's *dame d'honneur*, a man who was discretion itself and *tout à fait grand siècle*—the Duc de Luynes. A quite insignificant young man, lacking alike in energy and in intelligence, a mere dullard whose greatest idea of enjoyment was to get early to bed: such is the Dauphin as depicted by the Duc de Luynes.

With this estimate of a man of the Court we may compare the following view, which was held by the majority of Frenchmen:

The Dauphin was held in little esteem by the nation. During his childhood there had been much talk of his cleverness; after he had been educated, and especially since his second marriage, there was no sign of any cleverness. He was of good repute as regards conduct and manners; and he was regarded as a religious fanatic who spent a great part of the day singing in choir and who was shocked

to see a neck uncovered and like Tartuffe required that a modest handkerchief should protect him from that scandalous spectacle; and a thousand pettinesses and generalities were attributed to him.

It is to be noted that Mouffle d'Angerville, who retails these "pettinesses," is on the whole favourably disposed toward the Dauphin and was one of the first to see in him the enemy of the Pompadour and the hope of the people.

We have had handed down to us many utterances of the Dauphin's and of the people round him. His friends were the most intolerant of men: the Bishop of Verdun, Nicolia the Comte de Muy, the Abbé de Saint-Cyr, the Duc de la Vauguyon. This set were all ardently opposed to the *philosophes*. "I had imagined that M. de Muy was moderate in his ideas," Madame du Hausset says in her *Mémoires*, "and that he had a restraining effect on the violence of others; but I heard him say that Voltaire deserved to be executed." The Dauphin himself could go quite as far, according to M. de Broglie, in his book, *Le Fils de Louis XV*. "Ah, if I were master," he exclaimed once to his mother, when she was urging him to be at least polite to Madame de Pompadour: "Ah, if I were master, I would make such an example of her as would terrify for centuries those who were inclined to corrupt the virtue of kings."

There were some who maintained that the Dauphin was in an undue hurry once to snatch the royal power and that religious fanatics incited him to do so. That was during the King's illness at Metz. Madame de Brancas tells the story. "Monseigneur le Dauphin came to Metz," she says, "escorted by the Duc de Châtillon. . . . The Dauphin had come to attend the obsequies of his father, the King of France, and to assume the crown, in much the same way as a Gascon gentleman would have come to his native village to bury his father and take possession of his house." This unceremonious behaviour gave offence. The King sent orders to M. de Châtillon to stop where the messenger should find him. . . .

The *philosophes* regarded the Dauphin as the most powerful protector of the Jesuits, and in this it must be admitted they were justified. . . . He had in truth a very warm affection for

the order. It is asserted even that he used to attire himself in Jesuits' garb to say his prayers. M. de Broglie has adduced superabundant proof that he was devoted to his Jesuit friends, that he rendered them all the services he could, that he intervened in their favour and that the blow which fell on them[1] affected him very deeply.

In this connection Mallet du Pan tells the following story:

> After the suppression of the Jesuits, it was reported to Louis XV. that the Dauphin had some of the Fathers at his house and that they were holding meetings there. Louis XV. had always had suspicions since the attempt on his life. One day he was put on the alert, but, as the Dauphin got wind of this, the gathering dispersed and the King, on entering, found only his son. He told him of the object of his visit and complained of the Dauphin's conduct. The latter, excusing himself, spoke of his devotion to the Society and said that he had so much trust in them that if they told him to step down from the throne he would do so. "And how would it be," asked the King, "if they ordered you to step up on it?" The Dauphin sank back in an armchair.

It was not until the Dauphin's last illness and after his death that the *philosophes* and the people alike began to modify their feelings in regard to him. After his death, especially, the people began to tell themselves that this prince whom they had so distrusted would perhaps have reigned more worthily than he in whom they had placed their faith with so little justification; they began to think of him as a man who by his conduct and his attitude had protested against the morals of the King and the Court, and they applauded his modesty, his chastity, his goodness. . . .

There were, indeed, some (and Diderot was of their number) who credited the deceased prince with "liberal ideas." Had he not been the intrepid champion of the *philosophes*? But the truth lies, I think, in a letter which Walpole wrote to a friend and in which he said that the Dauphin's death rejoiced the *philosophes* "because they had feared he would re-establish the Jesuits." This, beyond a doubt, was the feeling of the Encyclopædists generally. . . .

There is a passage in the *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* which also helps us to understand how the Encyclopædists'

[1] Their expulsion from France in 1762.

fear of the Dauphin helped to reconcile them to the character of Louis XV. She tells us of a conversation between Quesnay and Mirabeau.[1] The former declared that it would be a great loss for France if Louis XV. were to die. Mirabeau was surprised at Quesnay's vehemence:

"Ah!" said Quesnay, "I think of what would follow." "Well, but the Dauphin is virtuous." "Yes, and full of good intentions and he has wit; but the religious fanatics will have absolute control over a prince who regards them as oracles. The Jesuits will govern the State as at the close of the reign of Louis XIV. and you will see the fanatical Bishop of Verdun Prime Minister and La Vauguyon all-powerful. . . . It is the beginning of his reign that I am afraid of when the imprudences of our friends will be brought to his attention as much as possible and the Jansenists and the Molinists will make common cause and will be leant on heavily by the Dauphin. You can count upon it, Monsieur, that the days of Huss and of Jerome of Prague will come back."

These lines should be pondered over; they render unnecessary many of the ingenious hypotheses which have been put forward to reconcile the independence displayed by the *philosophes* as towards the nation with their protestations of obedience and fidelity to the King. As I have said, their conduct was actuated by something more than mere tactics: the present reign appeared to them a golden age when they looked forward to the perils which were imminent.

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IT will be seen into what a strange blunder those people have fallen who have sought to find in the *philosophes* precursors of the Republicans. We must be careful not to pay too much attention to certain intemperances of expression on the part of the more audacious of the innovators. Helvetius, d'Holbach, Raynal,[2] Diderot, intoxicated by their own audacities, indulge sometimes in virulent onslaughts against the very principle of monarchy. It is extravagant to think of Helvetius as an early type of Republican merely because he declared once that monarchical government "penned up genius, corrupted manners, and stifled liberty." It would not be difficult to find similar

[1] *B.* 1749, *d.* 1791.

[2] Claude-Arien Helvetius, *b.* 1715, *d.* 1771; Baron d'Holbach, *b.* 1723, *d.* 1789; the Abbé Raynal, *b.* 1713, *d.* 1796.

charges brought against it in Voltaire. As for the famous lines of Diderot—

> Et ses mains ourdiraient les entrailles du prêtre
> Au defaut d'un cordon pour etrangler les rois.[1]

—I do not know how anyone can find it in his conscience to cite them without adding that they come in a dithyramb given forth in special circumstances which the author himself has described. For anyone in search of Diderot's ideas to go for them to a poem entitled *Les Eleutheromanes ou les Furieux de la Liberté* and to which he gave as sub-title the words: *Ou Abdication d'un Roi de la Fève*,[2] is a strange idea or else an act of bad faith. . . . It was not Diderot's fault if out of the entire dithyramb these two lines were the only ones to be remembered by his friend Naigeon, who put them into prose, transforming a "licentious" couplet into a piece of declamatory fustian. Read the article "Roi" in the *Encyclopédie* (the edition of 1818 attributes it to Diderot) and you will find a panegyric upon the good Sovereign which Télémaque would not have disowned. "His subjects form a rampart of brass around his person and the army of a tyrant flies before them like a light feather at the will of the wind which carries it along." The writer does not hesitate to declare that the best prince is he who is content to "govern according to the laws of the State as God governs the world according to the laws of nature." Assuredly it is neither Louis XIV. nor Louis XV. who seems to him the ideal king; but he has his conception of this ideal king, and far from wanting to strangle him with the entrails of a priest he is ready to sing his praise in verse.

A great many reformers have looked to a despotism for the sole and unique means of bringing their economic and social theories to fruition. There were the Physiocrats, for instance. There is a book which Diderot regarded as an admirable masterpiece—namely, the work of Mercier de la Rivière,[3] which was

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[1] "And, lacking a rope, his hands would draw out the entrails of a priest wherewith to strangle kings."

[2] *Fève* = Beanstalk.

[3] *B.* 1720, *d.* 1793.

one of the Gospels of the Physiocrats. The best government, it maintained, was that of a prince " reigning by right of birth, co-proprietor of the net product of the lands under his rule." This monarch would govern " despotically "—that is to say, without any control over his actions, except that " privileged orders " would restrict his powers on the pretext of acting as intermediaries between him and the nation; but he would never be able to govern " arbitrarily," because he would be governing " physiocratically "—that is to say, he would conform with the laws of the natural order, promulgated by Quesnay and his school. The good despot would have for his subjects men trained by the Physiocrats, citizens whose economic education would be perfect and for whom the economic principles of Mercier de la Rivière would be the axioms.

In his *Histoire du Gouvernement Parlementaire en France* Duvergier de Hauranne remarks of the Physiocrats that, " preoccupied above all with material ameliorations," they are ready " indifferently " to accept them from the absolute king or from the sovereign people, from aristocracy or from democracy, from a monarchy or from a republic. It is no doubt true that they would have been ready to accept ameliorations from any kind of political government, but they were firmly convinced that in fact they would be indebted to a despotism. The first of Quesnay's general maxims runs as follows: " That the sovereign authority be unique and superior to all individual members of the community and to all unfair enterprises of particular interests, for the purpose of authority and of obedience is the security of all and the rightful interests of all. The system of counter-forces in a government is a disastrous opinion which discloses only discord among the great and the subjection of the humble." This maxim embodies the formula of the unity of absolute power, without counter-weights, without limitations. It seems to admit the " sovereign authority " of the nation, but, completed and illuminated by the rest of the doctrine, it amounts to this: it is clearly from the enlightened despot that Quesnay and his friends expect the economic and social reformation.

One feels how far removed they are from Montesquieu's

theory of the three powers: they oppose this legal despotism not only to arbitrary despotism, but also and above all to constitutional monarchy, to parliamentary government, to the principle of the separation of powers. Absolute freedom for commerce, for industry, for personal property, thanks to one single, strong power, acting with decision and without appeal: that was the programme of the Physiocrats. Why should government by means of free discussion be admitted by these economists who were convinced that they held the happiness of mankind in their hands? Once the education of all classes of society had been achieved, there was no use in turning back: the good despot was the guarantee of public welfare. Experience, moreover, would render them more intractable on this subject. When one of their friends came to power and attempted to enforce the doctrine of enlightened despotism, where were his opponents? Turgot had against him all the privileged bodies, the nobility, the magistracy; the "intermediaries" would take their stand against the reformer and wreck his scheme for an economic reform undertaken by the royal power or its representatives; the reform, not having been made by the monarchy, would be made without it and against it. But were not the Physiocrats founded to demonstrate that Montesquieu's political system was contrary to their economic system?

I will venture to say that, without going so far as the Physiocrats in this direction, the *philosophes* thought more or less as they did. To begin with, like Quesnay, they subordinated the political question to the economic question, and this fact has its importance. Let us take Duclos, one of the most moderate of the Encyclopædists, and let us see from his *Considérations sur les Mœurs* what he considers ideal government.

The "form" of government, he holds, matters little. Some people have their preferences due to their particular taste, others are influenced by reasons taken from "locality and racial character. . . . The best of governments is not that which makes men most happy, but that which makes most men happy." Thus political considerations are ranged below, and at a great distance from, social considerations: that is to be

noted first of all. The essential thing is not to know whether it be one person who governs, or several persons, or the people, but whether any given political form be suitable to a country and could bring it more happiness than another political form. And it is not the degree of happiness which has to be looked to, it is the number of people for whom happiness is to be secured. The prosperity of any one class in the State is nothing if it be not accompanied by the prosperity of the others, and Duclos has in mind those classes which are " unfortunately the most despised " and the most useful to the nation. There was nothing new in that, we are well aware: since Fénelon's time, and even before, analogous ideas had found expression; it is one of La Bruyère's claims upon our gratitude that he asserted the right of the poor to happiness; but the seventeenth century had not posed in so categorical a fashion the absolute subordination of political questions to social questions.

Now Duclos is one of those who consider the royal authority as " an article of faith," but his is an enlightened faith, as one may gather from the above. He is convinced, and he says so unceasingly, that the monarchy, as applied to the French locality and racial character, is the régime which can bring happiness to the greatest number of people in the country. I say which " can " bring, for Duclos protests eloquently against the actual condition of things wherein a number of individuals had built up out of materials which they had taken from the poverty of others a condition of happiness that they themselves no longer knew how to appreciate.

The *philosophe* is struck by the sight of these heart-breaking miseries, but he is convinced that the monarchical government is the only one which could get rid immediately of social iniquities. The king whom he and his friends are looking for is assuredly not Louis XV. The evidence thereof stares them in the face, but they refuse to look at it, and they persist as long as they can in hopes they have placed in this monarch, who is so mediocre, but who is the " King," and who therefore has it in his power to bring about the great things they await.

In 1756 d'Argenson wrote:

The King would have a fine rôle to play, it would be to place himself at the head of public opinion and to carry out reforms himself. . . . If Henri III. was obliged to place himself at the head of the League, Louis XV. ought to place himself at the head of modern thought, of justice and of reason, in order to re-establish his power and his good fortune. May he boldly constitute himself the chief of the reformers of the State in order to achieve, better than they could do, the reparations demanded by the situation in France!

What was required if the future was to seem more brilliant than ever? "A King who would combine absolute authority with the force of reason," replies the Marquis. Louis XV. had the first essential; he needed only the second. The ills of France were multiplying, they were borne with only because the remedy was there and, as was hoped, would be sooner or later applied. "The sole remedy," declared Grimm, "against all the ills involved by the immensity of our States, the multiplicity of our laws, the slowness and uncertainty of our justice, the impunity of resourceful and clandestine crime and the favour of unjust power—the sole remedy, if it exists, must be sought in the character and in the heart of him to whom the right to rule has come with his birth." All that was wanted was to set it in action; everything would be changed as by a miracle. The royal power would appease all sorrows and would silence all hatreds, even the most implacable and most ancient —those of religion. The monarchy, if it wished, would bring triumph to the ideas so dear to the *philosophes*—liberty of conscience and universal tolerance. Voltaire wrote to Frederick the Great: "I am convinced that it rests now with a Sovereign to stifle in his kingdom all seeds of religious rage and ecclesiastical discord." Voltaire was not thinking merely of the King of Prussia; any sovereign, he believed, could achieve this step forward any day. Diderot's friend, the Scottish surgeon, Hoop, a man of melancholy disposition but wise, thus expressed his view:

I would like to say to a prince: have a numerous army under your command and you will have universal tolerance, you will overthrow those strongholds of ignorance, superstition, and uselessness [the monasteries and convents]. You will reduce to the simple condition of citizens those men of right divine who unceasingly set up their chimerical prerogatives against your authority; you will take back what they have extorted from the imbecility of your predecessors, you will restore to your unhappy subjects the wealth with which these dangerous do-nothings overflow; you will reduce their proud leader to his line and his net;

you will prevent immense sums from being squandered in a foreign gulf whence there is no return; you will have achieved great things without exciting a murmur, without spilling a drop of blood. . . . It would not be difficult for a political prince to raise the higher clergy against the Court of Rome, then the lower clergy against the higher, in order to debase the entire body.

Finally, the book of Mirabeau himself, Mirabeau whose audacities were to lead to the Bastille, ended with two invocations: the one to the friends of humanity, the other to Louis XV., whom he urged to become the type of the true King, "*le roi pasteur*," and to found a Ministry of Agriculture, divided into four departments, corresponding to the former division of nature into four elements: the departments of land, of water, of air and of fire. Louis XV. had other things on his mind: the "shepherd King" showed his right to this title by improving the *Parc aux Cerfs*,[1] to which he devoted more attention than to agriculture. In any case, there was question of more than an expedient, more than a mere matter of procedure in these appeals: it was believed, down to the very last years of the reign, that the Sovereign would hearken to these invocations and that, on the day he did so, France would be born anew.

And if the *philosophes* generally did not go as far as the Physiocrats, if they were not devotees of despotism, let us see how they counted on preventing the monarchy from degenerating into tyranny. We shall discover that they seldom had very clear or precise notions as to means of curbing the royal power. Vauvenargues,[2] for his part, said out straight: "However one may try to temper the Sovereignty in a State, no law is capable of preventing a tyrant from misusing the authority at his command." This was to make very light of the difference which Montesquieu tried to establish definitely between a Despotism and a Monarchy. Voltaire also had no belief in any such difference, and he said of the two forms of government: "They are two brothers, who are so much alike that you often take the one for the other. Let us admit that they

[1] The royal deer park.

[2] Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues, *b.* 1715, *d.* 1747. The author of the famous Maxims.

have been from all time two big cats round whose necks the rats have tried in vain to hang a bell." The rats kept trying in the eighteenth century, but very clumsily as a rule.

Great clumsiness was shown, according to Voltaire, in the efforts to restrict the royal prerogatives by means of other prerogatives; for his own part, he declared he would rather have to do with one wild beast which he could avoid than with a pack of little tiger-cubs which he would constantly be finding between his legs. This was an out-and-out condemnation of the "*Constitutionnels*," yet both Vauvenargues, who coined the fine maxim, "Servitude debases men to the point where they come to love it," and Voltaire, also, were eloquent foes to tyranny. It must be agreed that the whole of this question lay in deep obscurity in the eighteenth century. Regnaud, concluding his *Mémoires Parlementaires* (February 1779), devised this formula: "The Frenchman subject to his King, the King subject to the laws—that is our motto." No doubt, but one cannot govern with mottoes! Something more is required. D'Argenson, also, who spent many years building up his plan for an ideal government, is not very explicit. One comes across many fine outlines of a Liberal Constitution in his work, but nowhere does one find a decisive reply to the question which arises so naturally: who will bell the cat? He counted chiefly, it would seem, "on the progress of universal reason. . . ." But that is not enough: one can govern no more with rhetorical axioms than with mottoes, and the kings who have no other trammels are quite free to develop into despots. The royal authority ought to be "free in its power, but tempered by reason and good morals," but that again is very vague.

Let us, however, be just. Let us admit that d'Argenson's idea, shared by almost all the *philosophes*, is that the monarchy which is truly beneficent is absolute monarchy, guaranteeing municipal liberty and commercial liberty, resting itself upon these liberties and indissolubly bound up with them. But, once again, this sets forth a problem without solving it, unless we consider sufficient the solution which consisted in dividing France up into five hundred departments or *intendances*, com-

prising small republics in which the powers were elective *but subordinated to that of the royal officers*, in such a way that the citizen had no one between himself and the King except the municipal council and the *intendant*. That is what d'Argenson called "*la démocratie dans la monarchie*"; with a royal authority, "not tempered by reason and manners," it was, at bottom, a monarchy pure and simple, which any day might become a despotism. And note that d'Argenson was one of the most "liberal" of those reformers! What are we to think of the others, if not that they were still vaguer upon this subject or that the idea of reserving to the nation itself the right to direct its own affairs made its appearance during this century very seldom and merely as a Utopia.

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THIS brings us back to our starting-point. It is easy to draw conclusions from our study. The first is that, contrary to an opinion often revived, respect for the monarchical power was not weakened at the close of the reign of Louis XV. If the King was no longer loved, royalty was still reverenced by the nation. The same populace which insulted the corpse of Louis XIV. acclaimed the grandson of the "*Grand Roi*"; the same populace which danced round the coffin of Louis XV. rushed along the streets to welcome the grandson of the "*Bien-Aimé*." Into this feeling of loyalty there entered at once a centuries'-old affection and the conviction that without the monarchy France was lost. The King was the incarnation of France, the cult of the King was but the form which patriotism assumed. The task of Louis XVI. was to be incomparably more difficult than that of his predecessors. Yet all need not have been lost if, instead of recording "134 boar-hunts, 134 stag-hunts, 270 roe-hunts, 33 hourailleries,[1] and 1025 shoots," and instead of forging locks on his anvil, he had set himself resolutely to study public affairs and had acquired, in default of ability, that experience of politics which he had always lacked. The machine was out of order, and it was old; it was capable of being mended, however, and of being made as good as new—that is to say, of being put

[1] Hunts with packs of curs.

in harmony with the ideas which the *philosophes* had diffused. At one moment it was believed that all was saved. Turgot and Malesherbes looked as though they were men sent by Providence to reorganise the Monarchy and to bring it into line with new ideas. Confidence returned—we know what happened in the end. But on the accession of Louis XVI. all Frenchmen rallied round the royal authority, and, upon the monument to Henry IV., a Parisian, perhaps one of those who had written some vile lampoon upon the deceased sovereign, wrote this simple expression of hope: "*Resurrexit!*"

The second conclusion is that the *philosophes* were not supporters of Louis XV. and partisans of the Throne from a spirit of servility. It would be childish to deny that they showed cleverness and *savoir-faire* in this direction. But this is not a sufficient explanation of their attitude and does not excuse the attacks of which they have been made the objects. First of all, in the earlier portion of the reign, they shared very naturally the illusions of the whole of France, they associated themselves with its rejoicings, and they were full of genuine admiration and gratitude towards the "Well-Beloved"; then, when the illusions had gone, they did not oppose a government which left them unhoped-for liberty and which sheltered them from the attacks of the religious fanatics; at the same time they congratulated themselves all the more in that they lived under a rule so liberal when they reflected that the king of the morrow would adopt new methods and that a terrible reaction would follow after the funeral of Louis XV. Finally, they all of them, more or less, believed in a paternal despotism; some of them because it was, according to their view, the only form of government capable of imposing on men the necessity of being happy; the others, because they looked askance at the men of birth and official rank: all of them alike, because they placed political questions far below social questions. "The Frenchman subject to his King, the King subject to the laws" —that motto of Regnaud's was also the motto of the *philosophes*, who refrained, indeed, from insisting upon the second portion of it because they reckoned on the force of public opinion and the law of progress rather than on the institutions

themselves. And then, they, also, were in favour at once of order and of liberty. " Liberty is the mainstay of the throne; order makes liberty legitimate "—such were the concluding words of d'Argenson's *Considérations*. The *philosophes* had not had before them the spectacle of a free people; they had before their eyes that of a people united, in spite of everything, under an authority which, whatever might be the faults of the Sovereign, retained its brilliant prestige. In their effort towards conciliation, the political liberty which they did not know had necessarily to be sacrificed to the political order which they did know. The *philosophes* were neither Republicans nor courtiers. That is the impression I would like my readers to carry away with them after reading the present chapter.

II

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE FAVOURITES

The story of the mistresses of Louis XV. has often been told; it will not be our task to recount it once again. We shall try merely to discover what kind of relations existed between the favourites and the *philosophes*. And, indeed, only two of the favourites will call for much of our attention and they in unequal measure: Madame de Pompadour [1] and Madame du Barry.[2] We shall merely glance at their predecessors, concerning ourselves less with the *divertissements* which they provided for the King than with the parts they played in the France of that period. We shall endeavour, in the first instance, to explain the attitude of the *philosophes* towards them and to refute incidentally a certain number of somewhat cheap accusations which have frequently been brought forward in this connection.

According to contemporaries, when Louis XV. received at the Château de la Muette the Archduchess Marie Antoinette of Austria, who had just married the Dauphin, he introduced Madame du Barry to her and made them sit at the same table. Marie Antoinette, it is said, did not realise the part which Madame du Barry filled, and asked one day what it was this woman did that caused so much talk. "She is a lady," was the answer, "who amuses His Majesty." Upon which she remarked: "Oh, well, if that is how it is, I promise to be her rival!"

The Dauphine, no doubt, discovered soon enough the kind of amusement that was supposed to be in question; and yet the characterisation was very inexact. "The position of *maîtresse déclarée*," M. Maugras reminds us in his book, *Le Duc de Lauzun*, "amounts to an official post. The *maîtresse déclarée* is never apart from the King; she has her residence at Versailles, wherein Ministers may be seen at work, and she is in receipt of a salary." That is true at least from the time of

[1] *B.* 1721, *d.* 1764 at Versailles.

[2] *B.* 1743, *d.* 1793. Madame du Barry's heroic devotion to the family of Louis XVI. led to her execution by the guillotine.

Madame de Châteauroux and the history of the favourites is part and parcel therefore of the history of the century. Madame du Barry's residence at Versailles had previously been occupied by a relative of the Pompadour's. It had been transformed into a magnificent palace, with a chapel and almoner attached: evidence enough of the "official" standing of the Comtesse! Louis XV. allotted to her also the Château de Luciennes, which his architect, Ledoux, fitted up artistically and to which he added a dainty little pavilion. The King would visit her there and a concert would be given there in his honour, followed by fireworks, a military parade and supper. Louis took it into his head to nominate a *Gouverneur* and the post was given to a blackamoor named Zamore who, according to scandalous tongues, was on the very best of terms with the Comtesse. In any case the appointment was given to him by letters patent, stamped with the State Seal and brought to the palace by the Chancellor Maupeou himself. In short, everything went to show that the royal mistress enjoyed a great position with important privileges attached to it. The "nomination" of the royal mistress by the King himself was a thing no more to be disputed than other nominations by him. Louis XV., moreover, had a way of modifying the legal standing of his favourites and of giving them titles which entailed due respect from his *entourage*.

One would never have imagined at the outset that the reign of this youth who showed such indifference in regard to women would be the reign of the *Cotillons*. "The King," the Duc de Villars had remarked, "does not yet cast his young and handsome eyes on anyone"; while Barbier[1] records a fruitless effort, officially made, to smarten up the young monarch.

Hippolyte had professed a deep aversion for Venus. Hippolyte married and became a good husband and a good father. His wife, Marie Leczinska, was no beauty, indeed, and she was of mediocre intelligence, but she had in her favour elegance and goodness and, above all, youth. All the desires of the young man were fulfilled. In vain did the Court seek

[1] Antoine Alexandre Barbier, *b.* 1765, *d.* 1825. Author of a famous *Diary*, to be cited frequently in subsequent pages.

to prevent the absurdity of a too perfect conjugal union. " In my eyes the Queen is still handsome," the King would reply quietly, betaking himself either to her presence or else to the chase. His passion for the chase never left him.

It was not so much to kill game that the King went hunting, however—it was rather to kill *ennui*. That was the malady by which he was devoured. It is to be feared that the Queen was not equal to overcoming it for him. The general opinion was that she lacked tact. She seems to have been doubtful of herself and given overmuch to ceremony; and according to some the King was not altogether to blame. Already the inevitable was foreseen. Fleury and the whole royal *entourage* recognised that the time was at hand when the King, having had two sons and eight daughters by this marriage, would grow weary of it and seek his distractions elsewhere. The question of morality never arose for a moment. Morality was not concerned with the adultery of a king: one thought only disturbed them—the thought of " the revolution which was to be feared in such circumstances." The best way for them to prevent any such dire results, according to Mouffle d'Angerville, would be to take the matter in hand themselves and to deposit in the King's bed a siren in regard to whom they could feel certain that she would not interfere in politics.

How the Queen, thanks to her confessor, whose good will had been secured, became convinced that she must decide to live apart from her husband, and how the first of the Demoiselles de Nesles, Madame de Mailly, who was neither young nor pretty, succeeded, on her second attempt, in overcoming the virtue and the shyness of Louis XV. is told all too daringly and piquantly in the chronicles of the period. What is more to our purpose to note is the way in which their choice was received. Amiable, cheerful, without personal ambition, the King's first mistress, selected by his Court, aroused no hostility. As for the populace, it was delighted by the adventure.

In fact the universal view was well expressed by d'Argenson, whom we find noting the incident as a step forward in the King's career. " The King is nearly thirty; he has proved himself a man in every way, and is it nothing in this con-

nection for him to have taken a mistress with whom he lives pleasantly?" As for the Queen, what had she to complain of? The conjugal fidelity of Louis XV. had lasted long enough in all conscience. "It was only right that, after working so hard and so assiduously with the Queen who has only given us ladies, he should amuse himself with someone younger, more attractive and more lively." It is not as though he went hunting after beauty, and taking for his mistresses the wives of other men, d'Argenson proceeds to remark. Poor M. de Mailly apparently doesn't count!

Barbier, for his part, not merely approves cordially of the whole thing but goes so far as to declare the arrangement beneficial both to the King's health and to his prestige: "There is no great harm in his moderating a little his ardour for the chase—a pursuit which, if it were to go on absorbing all his days, at all hours and all seasons, could not but affect his temperament and render him sombre and morose. Dalliance with women and social amusement will take up less of his time and will contribute better to the forming of his character." Barbier, we must note, is not altogether lacking in principles—at least he takes the view that the subject of the King's mistresses is no trifling one. Later we shall find him saying, about the ribald songs at Madame de Pompadour's expense: "It must be admitted that all this is very imprudent and most insolent. It should suffice for the King to form an attachment for any woman whatever for her to become respectable in the eyes of all his subjects." To the contention that a King of France ought not to have mistresses at all, we have his answer ready: "Who is there that has none?" And he would point to the Duc d'Orléans, the Comte de Charolais, the Comte de Clermont, and end up triumphantly: "Out of a score of Court nobles there are fifteen who do not live with their wives and who have mistresses. Nothing is more usual in Paris for private individuals. It is ridiculous, therefore, to wish the King, who after all is the master, to be worse off than his subjects, and than all his predecessors on the throne." All that was essential was that His Majesty should not forget to go to Communion at Easter.

Verses began to be printed celebrating this new national event. It is curious to note that the French count already at this early date on the *maîtresse déclarée* mixing herself up in politics, on her forcing His Eminence into the background and on her persuading the King to govern on his own account —that is to say, with her own assistance. It was only when the King's own famous remark to Fleury passed into circulation that opinions on the subject began to change. The Minister, so the tale went, had made some remonstrances to Louis on the subject of his private life and Louis had replied cuttingly: "I have left the conduct of my kingdom in your hands. I hope you will allow me to be master of my own conduct." A significant saying, which the artful old man sought to keep to himself. But it got about and people commented: "What? We are not going to have the revolution in matters of government which we all hoped for? And so it wasn't worth while after all making up to Madame de Mailly!" . . . She was a source of general disappointment, and scurrilous songs were launched both at her and at the King.

We all know how she was to expiate eventually in penitence and retirement those years during which, according to an expression of the time, she put Louis XV. through "a course of lubricity." But she had already been through a time of trouble ere then. The King was still bored. He took a new mistress, Madame de Vintimille, one of Madame de Mailly's sisters. On this occasion a more radical change in affairs was counted upon: Madame de Vintimille was by way of being an *intrigante*, practical and ambitious and determined to take a hand in the affairs of State. But she was to die in childbirth —there were reports that she was poisoned.

The King nearly went mad with grief. His feelings although so violent were, however, short-lived. He took back Madame de Mailly, but presently forced her to put up with the collaboration of her youngest sister, Madame de Lauragnais. According to the contemporary memoirs the King contrived to enjoy himself between the contrasting charms of the thin Madame de Mailly and the fat Madame de Lauragnais. There remained only two other sisters for the King to smile upon. One of them

escaped his favours—not, we are told, through her own fault. The courtiers call her "the chicken" by reason of her ingenuous demeanour. It was this aspect of her, doubtless, that piqued the King, but the Marquis de Flavacourt, her husband, was of no mind to go shares in her—not even with Jupiter. He intimated to her that he would kill her, without more ado, if she in her turn should follow the traditions of her family. The other sister was the Marquise de la Tournelle, later Duchesse de Châteauroux. She was now to supplant Madame de Mailly and she not merely stipulated for the sending off of the latter but also took precautions to ensure that she should not be treated as a woman used merely for the "amusement" of the King. "The time had not come," someone wrote in regard to the period immediately preceding, "when the *petits appartements* were to be the centre of politics and negotiations." Now, the time *had* come. When Louis XV., from this date onwards, was to feel inclined for a mere frolic, he was to have what were then described as his *passades*—his fleeting fancies; but the *maîtresse déclarée*, the only authentic and official mistress, was henceforth to have her part in the government and to be an influence in politics.

At first the public applauded this new departure. It was a change, or rather, as the memoirs put it, "an important revolution which made the nation and Europe take notice of what was about to happen." The King, after Fleury's death, having declared that he himself would govern, was it not natural that the new mistress should encourage him in his generous intentions and be to him an affectionate and dear counsellor? If the handsome Sovereign was to achieve big things, was it not probable that he would do so under the sway of love? The public appealed to the favourite to render this service to the country and the poets thus appealed to her:

> Comme une autre Sorel, fais entendre à ton Roi
> Que seul, dans des États, il doit donner la loi! [1]

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[1] "Like another Sorel, make the King realise that he alone should give out the laws in his realms!"

Accordingly the name Agnès Sorel [1] was applied to Madame de la Tournelle:

> This new Agnès Sorel [writes Richelieu] made him realize that it was time for him to become the master and to have the appearance at least of governing. It was she who, dragging him away from the soft life of the palace, made him place himself at the head of his armies in Flanders; it was she who, making him tour through his kingdom from one frontier to another, dragged him into Alsace in order to arrest the progress of the enemy; finally it was she who, when she was being driven away from the King's side, won for him the surname of *Bien-Aimé*—which was given to him precipitately, no doubt, and which it would have been better for his memory had he never borne. We cannot tell to what heights she might not have raised the soul of her royal slave had she reigned longer.

The new favourite became the King's inspirer. What both Marshal de Noailles and Maurice de Saxe found beyond them, she achieved with her charms—she instilled into the King a martial ardour from which the nation expected great things. When, during the campaign in Flanders, she decided, on Richelieu's advice, to rejoin Louis XV. with the army, songs on the subject began to circulate among the troops—songs to the effect that she had no business upon battle-fields, and that she would do better to be more retiring in her capacity as the King's counsellor. Then came the illness of Louis at Metz, when the Bishop of Soissons insisted, before giving the last sacraments to the Sovereign, that the favourite, now Duchesse de Châteauroux, be sent away. It was a terrible journey that she had to make, accompanied by her sister, Madame de Lauragnais, running the gauntlet of the insults and menaces of people who the day before were calling her Agnès Sorel but who now were so much incensed against her as to wish to kill her. The notion had got about that she had been the cause of the malady by which the King was seized—was he not succumbing to the excesses into which she had led him! So the talk went. And she was accused, moreover, of shameful intrigues and an insatiable covetousness. Madame de Mailly had at least remained poor—as a matter of fact, though they forgot it, her poverty was due to the Cardinal. The Duchesse de Châteauroux, on the contrary, had secured

[1] In allusion to the favourite who exercised so great an influence on Charles VII.

for herself an income of 80,000 francs "*pour récompenser son mérite et sa vertu*," as the letters patent said, and, in addition the superintendence of the house of Madame la Dauphine.

But the King got well again and returned home a conqueror, cherishing to the depths of his heart his affection for the Duchess, now pitilessly banished and humiliated. The hour of her revenge had come, but the anger of the masses persisted, and when the favourite was re-established in all her titles and dignities, she was not restored to popular favour. Suddenly there came the news of her death, aged only twenty-seven. She died, it was said, in a state of touching resignation, edifying her confessor, Père Ségaud, and reconciled to her virtuous sister, Madame Flavacourt. Among the various explanations given of her sudden end one found favour with the crowd. The Duchess, it was declared, was convinced that she had been poisoned. During her fever she never ceased talking about her enemies—it was they who killed her, she declared. It was asserted that she had had a visit from Comte d'Argenson, sent by the King to ask her the names of those whom she wished to have punished, and that she had begun her list with the Comte d'Argenson himself. According to the story it was he and other members of the Court who were responsible for her murder. But these accusations have no ground—that, perhaps, is why they came to be so easily credited. In any case, a reversion of feeling came about and the following epitaph was read with sympathy from one end of France to the other:

> Sans relever l'éclat de mon illustre sang,
> Ce trait seul fera vivre à jamais ma mémoire:
> Mon Roi revit le jour pour me rendre mon rang,
> Et je meurs sans regret pour lui rendre sa gloire![1]

Later, when the "Well-Beloved" had ceased to be spoken of by that title, this epitaph was to appear insufficiently appreciative of the dead woman and too flattering of the King.

[1] The following is a more or less literal translation: "Without pointing to the fame of my illustrious descent, this fact alone will make my memory live for ever: my King saw well one day to restore to me my rank, and I die without regret to restore to him his glory."

It would seem that the Duchess might really have exercised a preponderating influence in France had her " reign " lasted. Madame de Pompadour was to hold sway for a longer period and at a time when the *philosophes* were organising their plans and preparing to pass from speculation to action. Madame de Châteauroux died on the 8th December 1744, before the forces of the *Encyclopédie* had come into existence. What would have been her attitude towards the Encyclopædists? Would she have been influenced by memories of the humiliations to which she had been subjected by the clergy? Would she have had continually before her eyes those dreadful hours of her flight from Metz? One may imagine so from the circumstance that the first of those who were punished when the day of her revenge arrived was the King's chaplain, the Bishop of Soissons. Would her feelings against the Church have been so strong that she would have welcomed the attacks levelled against it by the *philosophes*? Who can say? And then as regards the King—having succeeded in making him go to the front would she have proceeded to make him take his place at State Councils, and would she herself have decided to give her support to the party of reform? Speculation on these points were idle. We shall be able, however, to appreciate the possibilities that would have been open to her when we note the place taken by the favourite by whom she was succeeded. When we chronicle the story of Madame de Pompadour we shall be chronicling the story of the entire period.

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THIS is a story which has rarely been told with the impartiality to be desired. Madame de Pompadour had enemies who took delight in misrepresenting the facts concerning her: among these enemies were conspicuous, to begin with—in her own lifetime—the great nobles, the people of the Court who, while showing her all the marks of outward respect, never forgave her for her bourgeois origin: these people left memoirs and diaries which are to be read with caution. Then there were the Jesuits and their partisans who, as we shall see, had good reason to hate her. Finally, there were the revolutionary writers who sought to blacken Royalty by throwing mud at

the royal mistresses and who, in order to show justification for applying the names " Caligula " or " Nero " to Louis XV. likened Madame de Pompadour to Messalina. Hence a whole mass of slanderous myths and unheard-of accusations which were destined to mislead public opinion in the eighteenth century and which later generations have been prone to accept without inquiry.

To-day we have arrived at a reasonable attitude towards these legends. The enemies of the Marquise have been condemned for their efforts to place the worst aspect on her parentage which, it is true, was not distinguished but which was not disgraceful; the charges in relation to Poisson, the financier, and his wife, Madeleine de la Motte, have been placed in the true perspective; we have got track of all the envious and underhand machinations aimed at her overthrow or designed, failing that, to tarnish her triumphs; we have seen it amply proved that, if the Marquise lavished money on sumptuous and delightful edifices, they were erected almost always upon land which belonged to the King and that these dwellings, moreover, were to pass into the hands of the Crown; we have learnt the real truth as to the legendary *Parc aux Cerfs* into which, according to Mouffle d'Angerville, were swept such herds of innocent victims. Whereas it was represented to have cost more than a milliard of francs, and to have been " one of the principal causes of the ruin of the country's finances," historians have established the fact that the famous building, situated in Rue Saint-Médéric at Versailles, was in reality much more modest than the so-called *petites maisons* of the great lords and great financiers, and that it could accommodate at most one young lady at a time, with a *dame de compagnie* and a single maid-servant; and finally, that the King got rid of it in 1771 for a sum of 16,000 francs. From this it has been deduced that, if Louis XV. was far from being a saint, he was no Sardanapalus, and that Madame de Pompadour, when acting as his mistress, was not " the superintendent of his pleasures, recruiting throughout the kingdom for him new and unknown beauties." Little by little, the fantastic tales so cleverly concocted in the eighteenth century, and so

complacently accepted down to our own time, have been upset by the evidence forthcoming from the authors who have written with most impartiality and who were best informed; by correspondence previously unpublished; by old archives, legal documents, business papers, etc., etc. The truth has come out. The truth is not very beautiful, but it does not justify the host of turgid denunciations and crude maledictions.

In the same way we have got rid of many false ideas as to the political rôle played by the Marquise—a rôle which began to be preponderant from the day when, ceasing to be the King's mistress, she acquired the state, according to the expression of Duclos, of his *amie nécessaire*—his "essential friend." Whatever may have been the way in which Bernis and Choiseul contrived to win her confidence, fair-minded students are agreed that her choice of counsellors generally was not so bad. The enemies of Madame de Pompadour have very skilfully exploited to her discredit the failures brought home to certain incapable *généraux de cour*. She has been made to look responsible for the disasters experienced by Soubise, and it is certain that she was wrong to support him, but before and after Rosbach,[1] in the popular songs of the day, her name was coupled thus with his:

> En vain vous vous flattez, obligeante marquise,
> De mettre en beaux draps blancs le Général Soubise . . .
> Et, quoi que votre faveur fasse,
> En tout temps on dira ce qu'à présent on dit,
> Que si Pompadour le blanchit
> Le Roi de Prusse le repasse.[2]

That was perfectly natural at the time. But at a distance the matter is seen more correctly. The verdict has now been reversed in favour of the Marquise, and her political plans are no longer condemned nor turned into ridicule just because

[1] The battle in which the French General Soubise was completely defeated by Frederick II. (the Great) in 1757.

[2] It will suffice to give the gist of these lines, as they have no great interest or point. They are to the effect that it will always be said that if the Pompadour "washed" General Soubise, it was the King of Prussia who "ironed him out."

our French generals were defeated in battle: "She has been blamed for the defeat of Rosbach," says A. Houssaye: "Woe to the vanquished! But she has not been fairly judged. If the generals had come back victorious, she would have had her share in their triumph; but after such disasters she will never be forgiven." The world at large could see only the failures, but historians recognise that Madame de Pompadour showed a certain prescience in realising that the danger to France would come one day not from Austria but from Prussia; and for us to-day it is not difficult to admit that her conception of the Seven Years' War was fully justified. We are assuredly entitled to protest against the theory that Madame de Pompadour was responsible for the weakening of our army and for our humiliation in the face of other countries. Had Maurice de Saxe been in the place of Soubise, the policy advised by Madame de Pompadour would have called forth nothing but commendations.

And yet, of course, there is a case to be made out against her. Even those critics who have viewed most favourably the *philosophes* and the men of letters of their period place it to their discredit that they were the *protégés* of the Marquise. Barni, for instance, declares that he cannot excuse them for asking the help of a favourite in their battle for *la philosophie*; Peigné, in his book on Duclos, admits his superiority over his rival candidate for the Academy, Foncemagne, but regrets that he won a victory "with which is unfortunately associated the name and the memory of the Pompadour." Larroumet is annoyed at finding in the list of the *protégés* of the Marquise, in addition to Voltaire and Marmontel, "names such as those of Crébillon *père*, Buffon and Montesquieu"; while the same writer, after citing Collé's remark that Marivaux was obliged when Madame de Tencin died to "receive benefits from people at whose hands he should not have accepted them," adds this comment: "There could be no dishonour in receiving benefits from Madame de Tencin, while those granted by Madame de Pompadour, that grasping favourite, that sham artist and sham wit, that self-seeking patroness, leave a stain on all those who had not the courage to hold back from them. . . ." For my

own part I am at a loss to see how it can have been more dishonouring to be indebted to Madame de Pompadour than to Madame de Tencin, and when I study the memoirs of the period I find this statement very strange.

That is why it seems to me to be worth while to inquire into the relations which existed between Madame de Pompadour and the *philosophes* and to try to find out if the homage which they paid her was dictated only by policy or whether they sincerely recognised in her a mind independent enough to understand them and a will strong enough to help them. Once again the question of "dignity" at this juncture seems to be based on a misunderstanding: Madame de Luynes, *dame d'honneur* to the Queen, the very pious and very estimable wife of the very pious and very estimable author of the famous *Mémoires*, did not think it beneath her dignity to receive Madame de Pompadour in her house at Dampierre. There is no need to defend her attitude. Nor do I think it was beneath the dignity of the *philosophes* to turn to the official mistress in order to save themselves from the Bastille or to ensure the triumph of their ideas. . . .

To begin with, let us remember that the raising of a bourgeoise to this position of royal mistress was in some degree a set-back to the nobility and the privileged classes and a triumph for the Third Estate. If we try to imagine the moral condition of the great world of society at this epoch we shall soon understand this idea which often finds expression in contemporary writings. "To place the wife of a sub-contractor in a position which the perversity of ideas caused people to regard as honourable for the most illustrious families," writes M. de Carré, "to emphasise the importance of the bourgeoisie by so striking a triumph over the nobility of the Court, was a most venturesome proceeding." It seemed, indeed, to stand little chance of success. There had been no lack of Court candidates. There was for instance, so we read, the beautiful Duchesse de Rochechouart, who had been widowed a year; she had been brought up with Louis XV. and she had made several attempts to obtain the position but had always failed. After the death of Madame de Châteauroux

she had placed herself at the head of the queue, but again unsuccessfully: "She was," the chroniclers tell us, "like the horses of the *petite écurie*, always put forward and never accepted." In a mood of pique she took Comte de Brionne as her second husband and died eighteen months after. There were also the Princesse de Rohan and many others, all plotting and planning in the same direction. And a bourgeoise, an ordinary bourgeoise, was to carry the day over the heads of rivals bearing such illustrious names, stepping into the shoes of the de Nesles sisters—members of one of the greatest families in France! "It is said that the King gives Madame de Mailly 6000 livres a month," Barbier had written. "If she chose she could make her husband a Duke without anybody raising objections. It is a name recognised among us as being of the *première noblesse*." Naturally, then, nobody would raise objections! But how could it be supposed that the child of a Poisson and of a La Motte—a girl who was reported to be the daughter and grand-daughter of butchers—would be given the position so yearned after by real duchesses and countesses? It seemed incredible. And later, when, after the famous Hôtel de Ville ball at which all the beauties were gathered together—all of them well aware that the Sovereign was going to make his selection—it was learnt that Madame d'Etioles, of the Poisson family, had fascinated the King, it was supposed to be merely one of his *passades*. "If it be really true," declared de Luynes, "it will prove probably to be a mere *galanterie* and not a question of a *maîtresse*."

Dispossessed of what they regarded as one of their privileges, the great ladies, together with their relatives and sometimes their husbands, after they had greeted respectfully the all-powerful new favourite, never ceased to resent the plebeian origin of which she had the impudence not to be ashamed. Indeed she had the audacity to receive publicly the aforesaid Poisson, her father, while her letters home—as we who have read them can testify—prove that she remained devoted to her family, although observing due measure and discretion; she remained a bourgeoise in very deed, regarding the courtiers as ambitious dullards, as did that other bourgeois named

la Bruyère.[1] The nobility did not give up the game. Madame de Pompadour had to contend not only with the Princesse de Rohan, but also against Madame de Forcalquier, against the Comtesse de la Marck, and against the Princesse de Robecq. Great ladies all!—the last especially, for she was a Montmorency and (a detail to be borne in mind) she had been discreetly launched upon her social career by her father, M. de Luxembourg. When Richelieu returned from Genoa in 1749 to take on his year as First Gentleman-in-Waiting, d'Argenson experienced a moment's hope. He felt that Richelieu would make a big effort for the glory and security of the kingdom and that he would get rid of the "*maîtresse roturière*"[2] and put another in her place. . . .

The Third Estate, on the other hand, enjoyed the disappointment of the nobility and welcomed the idea that Louis XV. was anxious to break away from the meshes of the Court, to enjoy loves more genuine than those of women of title, to make things less unpleasant for the Queen, so often and so seriously hurt. Barbier, unlike Luynes, penned a courtier-like eulogy of the new mistress. He enumerated her distinguished talents and predicted that she would not soon lose her position. She was worth more than any of her rivals, he declared; she had, on the other hand, more to lose by accepting a position so dangerous. The condition of a bourgeoise of this kind was, he thought, preferable to that of a royal mistress.

The brilliant education which she had received was calculated to predispose the Marquise for friendship with men of letters and artists. I shall not dwell upon her services to the arts. Her brother, the Marquis de Vandières, afterwards Marquis de Marigny, whose artistic feeling she had trained, was placed in control of the buildings and gardens and art treasures and manufactories of the King on the death of Le Normant de Tournehem. He won from Quesnay this fine tribute: "No one since Colbert has done so much in his place." He was well suited to act as intermediary between the Marquise and the artists. "The elegant Marquise," says

[1] *B.* 1645, *d.* 1696. Famous by reason especially of his book, *Caractères*.
[2] *Roturière* = plebeian.

M. Carré, "has left her stamp on all the art of the century"; the Sèvres manufactory, for instance, was started by her. . . . But she was above all the protectress of men of letters, even if she did not show any great discrimination in this respect: she preferred Duclos to Montesquieu, we are told, and Crébillon to Voltaire. The Marquise, in fact, was woman enough to have predilections. Nor must we reproach her if in her sympathy she procured for her former teacher Crébillon the delight of seeing the triumph of his *Catilina*. That was a kind action on her part, and she bettered it later by arranging for a complete edition of Crébillon's works to be issued from the royal printing-press, granting him a pension into the bargain from her own funds.

She is charged with being partly responsible for the two failures which Marmontel experienced as a dramatist and with encouraging him in a line in which he was not wise to venture. In any case she was not alone in taking Marmontel for a genius and it was certainly kind of her to appoint him *secrétaire des Bâtiments* so that he might be in a position to make a success in the world of books, if not in that of the stage. That Madame de Pompadour had a real feeling for men of letters is indisputable. When, after the war, the King went to Choisy for a rest, he welcomed a number of men of letters together with a few privileged members of the Court. We read that Duclos, Voltaire, Gentil-Bernard, Moncrif and the Abbé Prévost sat at table there with the Comte de Tressan, while, close by, Richelieu, d'Ayen, de Meuse, and Duras supped in the company of the King and his mistress. Madame de Pompadour was quite at her ease in this company; she helped to secure Voltaire's admission into the Academy. The loyal spirit in which she rendered such services is shown in a letter to the Abbé Le Blanc who had solicited her help to secure the *fauteuil* hoped for by Duclos:

I know, Monsieur [she wrote], that there is a vacancy in the French Academy and it is the case that it seems to be destined for M. Duclos by reason of the number of votes which he received at the last election. I am interesting myself on his behalf and when he has got in, should there be a second vacancy, I shall act with pleasure on your behalf. I know that you deserve it by your talents and by your zeal for the glory of the King.

Later she kept her promise and when her brother besought her influence for Gresset she spoke with no less candour. " I assure you, my brother," she wrote, " that I told M. Gresset I shall not say a word for him, as I am interesting myself on behalf of the Abbé Le Blanc . . . if he will wait quietly, however, I promise him that when there is another vacancy I shall exert myself to obtain for him the votes of those Academicians whom I know."

Nor did she show any resentment when Gresset, who did not " wait quietly," was elected instead of her candidate. On the contrary she saw that he was given the *entrée* to the dramatic performances at the Court, had his play *Le Méchant* produced at one of them, and thus contributed greatly to his renown. Nor did she leave the Abbé out in the cold. When, eventually, she became convinced that he was not qualified to be an Academician, she was at pains to find something else to compensate him. She made him a *secrétaire des bâtiments* and he had no reason to be dissatisfied.

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" THE position of the Marquise," writes M. de Carré, " necessarily made her an essential ally of the reformers and the interested protectress of all the new reputations, for the prestige of birth was weakened by setting literary glory up against it." To what degree did this calculation enter into the attitude of Madame de Pompadour? I find it hard to believe that she protected the Encyclopædists chiefly with the intention of rendering less intractable the aristocratic pride of the great nobles; I prefer to think that if she calculated at all her motives were quite different. She was too intelligent not to understand that the royalty of opinion was being raised up against the royalty of Divine Right; and that this second force, then only at its birth, was asserting itself with such vigour that it must very soon balance the first; that already the first had to reckon with it, and to try to get it on its own side. She met the Encyclopædists half way, therefore, because they had public opinion in their hands and because she foresaw in them the irresistible force, the true sovereignty, of the morrow.

And we must remember that she had been taught in good time to understand and esteem them. Mademoiselle Poisson, in the days when she frequented the *salon* of Madame de Tencin, had met there Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Marivaux, Duclos and Piron. When she had become Madame d'Etioles, she made friends with Madame Geoffrin and completed her philosophical education at that lady's famous "Wednesdays". It had been her dream to entertain these bold thinkers and reformers—their audacities had been a delight to her before she could clearly understand whither they led. Unluckily the set of her uncle, de Tournehem, consisted rather of men in the world of finance, while d'Etioles, her husband, was not the man to gather round him the kind of people who formed Madame Geoffrin's circle. . . . Now, however, as royal mistress, Madame de Pompadour could realise all her aspirations. Upstairs in her pretty dwelling she welcomed the independent minds that were engaged in thinking out a new world; beneath the lacquered wainscotings, in the midst of the most refined luxury, Dr Quesnay's friends took their ease in her elegant, delicately fashioned arm-chairs, the Doctor himself presiding, rough, brusque, downright, affectionate, holding forth against abuses and injustice, displaying emotion when he conjured up pictures of the happiness to be brought about in the future. In the Council Chamber below the King would be assisting, silent and bored, at the deliberations of his Ministers, the Marquise with him, listening and deciding. Presently she would leave and appear suddenly among the bold debaters engaged in arguments with Dr Quesnay or, if prevented from joining them, she would ask Madame du Hausset to tell her what was afoot. . . . Thus it was that she controlled the destinies of France: downstairs trying to repair the breaches in the edifice, while planning up above to overthrow it and to build up another more spacious and more satisfactory.

The Marquise neglected no opportunity of manifesting publicly her sympathy for the *philosophes*. When the *fermier-général* Dupin and his wife were preparing a refutation of *L'Esprit des Lois*, it was to her that Montesquieu addressed himself with a view to stopping its publication, and the daughter of

the sub-contractor protected the *philosophe* from the financier's attack. She never concealed her admiration for the *Encyclopédie*: "*un beau livre*," she described it to Louis XV. himself. "She dared to protect the Encyclopædists," writes A. Houssaye, "against the King, the Clergy, and Parliament. She stood up for the right of the human mind against the Right Divine." Soon after she had risen to the position of royal mistress, Voltaire wrote to her: "It is not as an old gallant and flatterer of fair ladies that I address you, but as a good citizen"; and the words point to the hopes which were placed in her: hopes strengthened by the fact that she was detested by the ultra-religious party and that she seemed to be the enemy of the Jesuits.

The *parti dévot*, indeed (as it was called), had begun to show its feelings the moment word got about that she was to succeed Madame de Châteauroux. The interest of the Church, it was feared, would be in imminent peril if the King were to come under the influence of this friend of Madame Geoffrin. The Bishop of Mirepoix felt the danger to be so great that he made haste to try to avert the blow. He went ahead a little too eagerly. The conspiracy which he helped to set on foot and into which he drew the Dauphin and his *entourage* proved a failure. In that letter from Voltaire which I have cited above, and which accompanied his lines on Cæsar and Cleopatra, occur the words: "I am convinced, Madame, that in Cæsar's time there was no Jansenist *frondeur* who would have dared to condemn that which should be the charm of honest folk, and that the chaplains of Rome were not fanatical imbeciles." Among the "fanatical" chaplains, he doubtless included Royer, the Bishop of Mirepoix, in whom the *parti dévot* had its leader. The struggle between the Bishops and the Mistress was to continue until her death, and even long afterwards. Madame de Pompadour did not feel that she ought to try to disarm such adversaries by concessions—they would prove fruitless. The first piece produced in the Petite Galerie des Cabinets, on 16th January 1747, by Madame Pompadour herself, was *Tartuffe*. It is not surprising if it could be said that she sometimes allowed herself to be swayed by her enmity

to the Clerical party and even to certain Ministers of the Church. "She liked the Comte de Machault," records one of her biographers, and she professed a high esteem for his character. But these feelings had their source less in a flattering appreciation of the services, the integrity, and the energy of this Minister than in opposition to the Clergy, whom she detested.

All the historians agree in attributing to her a preponderating part in the expulsion of the Jesuits. It is said that she had made advances to them. She was on excellent terms with the Père de la Tour (who was a great friend of Voltaire), and her relations with this one priest made her feel that she could exert influence over the Jesuit Fathers generally, but she was wrong, as she discovered on the occasion of the famous Jubilee of 1751 when His Majesty's Jesuit confessors tried to make him break, either temporarily or for good, with his mistress. We must not hasten to conclude that we have in this a refutation of the statement made in the *Provinciales*[1]: the Jesuits on this occasion had no alternative. Their relations with the Dauphin were close, and they had to choose between displeasing him, their most devoted friend and most faithful champion, and alienating completely the King's mistress, who was an ally of the enemies of the Church and whose reign might soon be over—for in 1751 the time was at hand when she would become only the King's *amie*. So it turned out. Within a few weeks she was the King's "friend" only, but the Jesuits' calculations had gone too far. Louis XV. made it clear that while the Pompadour had begun to weary him as a mistress, it was a mistake for people to imagine that he was separating from her. Madame de Pompadour remained on, and all the opponents of the Jesuits were to count more on her influence than on that of Bernis[2] or of Choiseul[3] to drive out of France those irreconcilable enemies of the Jansenists,

[1] The famous work in which Pascal attacked the Jesuits.

[2] François Joachim de Bernis, French poet, Minister and Cardinal, *b.* 1715, *d.* 1794.

[3] Duc de Choiseul, *b.* 1719, *d.* 1785, Minister for Foreign Affairs under Louis XV.

of the *Parlements* and of the Encyclopædists. I shall not repeat here the story of the events which ended in August 1762 with the expulsion of the Society. It was a matter of dispute whether it was Madame de Pompadour who excited Choiseul against the Jesuits or whether it was he who excited her. It seems to me that neither stood in any need of being "excited" in this direction. Saint-Priest in his *Histoire de la Chute des Jésuites* declares that the Minister sought to please the *philosophes*, "those exacting preceptors under whose influence he fell continually." As for Madame de Pompadour, we have seen what her reasons were for hostility to the Society, and we may suppose that she also will not have been disinclined to "please the *philosophes*." The world at large, as I have said, attributed to her a large share in the event, as we may gather from a prophetic quatrain circulated at the time:

Au Livre du Destin, chapitre des grands Rois,
On lit ces paroles écrites:
De France Agnès chassera les Anglois
Et Pompadour les Jésuites.[1]

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THE *Lettres de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour*, published in 1772, throw an interesting light upon the relations between her and the Encyclopædists. These letters are not authentic but they show us what was thought in the eighteenth century about the Marquise—about her ideas and about her character—for they are based upon facts and anecdotes familiar to her contemporaries. As Voltaire wrote to Madame du Deffand: "Many of the facts are true, some false. . . . All those who did not know this woman will believe that the letters are hers." In one letter she is made to say:

Your little book, *Les Considérations sur les Mœurs*, is a golden book. It is an excellent portrait of an original which I hate and despise: you are fortunate in knowing this world only as a philosopher and in being only a spectator of it.

[1] "In the Book of Fate, in the chapter on the great Kings, these words may be found: From France will Agnès [Sorel] drive forth the English and Pompadour the Jesuits."

That is just the tone of the woman who, in the letters which she really did write, and which have since been published, said to her brother:

I have seen much and reflected much since I have been here; at least I have gained some knowledge of men and women and I assure you they are the same in Paris or in a provincial town as they are at the Court. The difference in circumstances merely makes things more or less interesting and makes vices stand out more in the glare of the light.

Two months later she wrote to him:

I am very glad to hear about the reception accorded to you by the Holy Father. The consideration which is shown me does not astonish me in this country in which everyone has or may have need of my service; but I am astonished that it should extend as far as Rome. Despite this pleasantness (which one must enjoy as it exists) my head is not being turned. . . . I hope that you will think like me and that you will not imagine yourself more important by reason of honours which are rendered to one's position and not to oneself.

The author of the apocryphal letters catches this tone quite well. Here for instance are some other words which he attributes to her:

The comedy of *Les Philosophes* is a vulgar libel and without wit. . . . I am astonished that the magistrates should have sanctioned the performances of a personal satire . . . I have refused to see M. Palissot; I would rather, *Dieu me pardonne*, see the illustrious M. Fréron!

And here are the sentiments put in her mouth regarding the *parti dévot*:

I have always had many enemies, I have some now among the "devout" and they are the worst of all. . . . I hate intolerant priests and if I were Sovereign I should persecute only the persecutors. . . . I have a sincere love for religion but I find it hard to love its ministers, especially since I have come to know them.

And here are some lines which she is supposed to have written to Montesquieu:

The world has too long been blind, but it begins to have eyes and to make use of them. I fear above all lest the *philosophes*, who see twice as much as others, may be over-zealous on this occasion. The Christian religion is true, holy and consoling: what is necessary is not to destroy it but to reform its abuses: cut off its useless branches but do not cut down the tree.

Such were the ideas which contemporaries had of the Marquise, and her death brought confirmation. Even her enemies were moved by her courage:

One had not imagined [wrote Mouffle d'Angerville] that Madame de Pompadour would see without murmuring and with heroic firmness the gradual appearance of death. The place where she went and the mood of the King made it necessary that she should not fail to fulfil the last duties of religion; and she attended to them without display and without pusillanimity. She spoke out asking pardon of the Royal House and of all the members of the Court present for the scandal she had given them.

She awaited her last hour calmly and equably. "One moment!" she said gently to the *curé* of the Madeleine, who was about to go out of her room: "One moment! We shall go out together! . . ."

As for the *philosophes*, it must be admitted that some of them did not show themselves grateful to the Pompadour. Rousseau was unjust to her; Duclos, in order to avoid the accusation of having been courtier-like, and in order to defend his friend Bernis, thought it his duty to speak of her with unfair severity. Marmontel was more indulgent and therefore came nearer to the historic truth. As for Voltaire, he wrote after her death some letters which make up for many meannesses and pettinesses. Voltaire has been blamed for his flattery of the Pompadour, but he is to be reproached much more for the evidences of his spite against her and for his jealousy of her kindness to old Crébillon. It was this jealousy that inspired his lines at her expense in *La Pucelle*.

Madame de Pompadour was in a position to take a crushing revenge on him for these countless petty attacks. She had in her hands quite a collection of *éloges* of her person signed "Voltaire"; and she possessed also a manuscript copy of his *Histoire de la Guerre Terminée par le Traité d'Aix-la-Chapelle*, which concluded thus:

It must be admitted that Europe may date its happiness from the day of this peace. It will be learnt with surprise that it was the fruit of the urgent counsels of a young lady of most high rank, famous for her charms, for her remarkable talents, for her wit and for a position which is the object of envy. It was the fate of Europe in this long quarrel that a woman began it and that a woman ended it; the second has done as much good as the first did harm.

She contented herself with allowing some of her intimate friends to read this—she showed it to Duclos, who made a copy of it, which he transmitted down to us; when the question was raised whether the evidence of Duclos sufficed, and whether, in agreement with the Marquise, he had not deceived us, the Pompadour manuscript, preserved in the Library of Aix, was there to prove beyond question the truth. Voltaire, then, was sufficiently punished.

Moreover, the things he said were inspired chiefly by his malicious humour. After the death of the Marquise, when he could not be accused of hoping for anything from her, he paid her more than one well-weighed tribute:

"Take it into consideration, my dear brother [he wrote], that the real men of letters, the true philosophers, must regret Madame de Pompadour. She thought on right lines; no one knows that better than I do. We have in truth experienced a great loss. . . . In the depths of her heart she was one of us: she protected letters as much as she could: a fine dream is now at an end. . . . She loved to be helpful. I believe she will be regretted, except by those to whom she was obliged to do harm because they wanted to do harm to her: she was a philosopher.

In those lines, the Patriarch of Ferney foreshadowed the verdict of posterity. It is now an accepted thing that the Marquise was a convinced and valuable protectress of the *philosophes*, and we see how right the contemporary painters were to portray her with volumes of the *Encyclopédie*, *L'Esprit des Lois*, *Le Contrat Social*, etc., etc., beside her.

"*Tout est bien, même le mal*," writes A. Houssaye, in this connection, "*pour la guerre de la Vérité*."[1] To what extent Madame de Pompadour is to be classed as *le mal* we have seen from the foregoing: in any case she was "*pour la guerre de la Vérité*."

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AT the time of the affair of the Jesuits, a print was published which met with a great success. On either side were the Duc de Choiseul and the Marquise de Pompadour, each armed with an arquebus and each aiming straight at the Jesuits. The King was shown sprinkling the corpses with Holy Water and the *Parlement*, attired in formal robes, was gravely digging

[1] "All is for the good, even what is evil, in the war on behalf of truth."

graves in which to bury the victims. Contemporaries thought it a very ingenious cartoon. For us, at least, it seems to summarise accurately the feelings of the people on these events in our history. The reign of Madame du Barry was now to bring the Jesuits a beginning of their revenge: the banishment of Choiseul and the suppression of the *Parlement* were considered by the Clerical party an expiation of the expulsion of 1762, and the merit of it was placed to the credit of the new mistress.

The King, as soon as the Marquise de Pompadour was dead, began to experience regrets over having fallen in with her advice and that of Choiseul. When the *Académie des Sciences* made an appeal that d'Alembert should be granted a pension, Louis replied that he was too much displeased with his latest works to accord him any favour. "It is believed," wrote Bachaumont, "that this speech referred to the book concerning the destruction of the Jesuits." Louis felt that he had gone too far, and the Clerical party hoped that he would perhaps go back on his decisions. The King was to be seen in the picture sprinkling the victims with Holy Water: it was not impossible that he might make good the injury that had been done them. Everything depended on the next mistress; for the moment the position was not filled; it was being occupied only by a series of substitutes—a great many of them in turn, according to the memoirs. At the moment of the Pompadour's death the King had for his temporary mistress a Mademoiselle de Romans, modest, pious, edifying her *curé* by her devotion and her charities. Since then, after many other brief liaisons, he had at last chosen one, Jeanne Bécu, the bastard child of Anne Bécu (or Bécas), destined to become in time the Comtesse du Barry.

That Madame du Barry, in her turn, was the object of all kinds of calumnies is beyond dispute. First she was made the target of obscene songs, then attacked violently by the pamphleteers, who sided with Choiseul, finally she furnished the revolutionary writers with matter for their disquisitions, more eloquent than accurate, on the corruption of vicious despots and their shameless courtesans. There are, however,

some documents which we must take seriously; for instance, some of the things included in the *Curiosités Historiques*, collected by J. A. Le Roi, preserved in the Library of Versailles. The origins of the Comtesse were very low and her story altogether was not a little scandalous, whether or not it be true (for it is not proved) that she was one of the *pensionnaires* of the Gourdan, or that she had immoral and lucrative relations with the *habitués* of the Duquesnoy gambling-hall to which her mother took her. It was there, certainly, that she became the mistress of the swindler who went by the name of Comte Jean Cérès du Barry, and whose motto, "*Boutez en avant!*"[1] which he declared had been conferred on his ancestors by Charles VII., was to serve as a theme for unseemly jests by the Duchesse de Grammont and her friends.

Certainly it would be difficult to libel the new mistress on account of her upbringing and personal morality, but on the other hand it seems probable that people went too far when they accused her of having recourse to trickery and duplicity, to tortuous and infamous manœuvrings, in order to attain political ends cunningly worked for. She was really more of a *grisette parvenue*, as someone described her, lively, fond of laughter, yawning at official receptions, easy-going and bearing no malice—a young person whom you ceased to hate when you got to know her better, owing to her *bonhomie* and vivacity. Contemporary pamphlets describe how she assisted once at an investigation of certain scabrous documents brought to the King by the Lieutenant of Police—the function took place on a Sunday. The police magistrate emptied out a portfolio which was bursting with all kinds of indecencies and obscenities. Louis XV. showed a keen interest in all this pornography, while the Du Barry went off into shouts of merriment and afterwards recounted all kinds of droll anecdotes, embarassing the gravity and propriety of the police service by her indiscretion and giddiness. On another occasion we are told how the Duc d'Orléans came to ask her to favour his marriage with Madame de Montesson and how she tapped him gaily on the stomach: "*Gros père!*" she exclaimed, "*épousez-la*

[1] "Push to the front."

toujours ! Nous verrons à mieux faire ensuite ; vous sentez que je suis fort intéressée ! "[1] The speech is that of a jolly comrade rather than of an ambitious woman. Her head is not turned by the royal splendour surrounding her. We are told how in presence of the King and a notary she jumped out of bed once stark naked and was handed one of her slippers by the Papal Nuncio and the other by the Grand Almoner of France; and it is added that these two personages were delighted with their good luck. The Duc de Tresmes, calling to see her and not finding her at home, leaves for her the message: " Madame du Barry's monkey came to pay her his respects and make her laugh." The whole world is at her service, the great dignitaries of the Church to hand her her slippers, the Duke to play pranks; and she remains unspoilt. As for the King, he is like a toy in her hands. Everyone knows he does just as she bids him.

Tu n'es plus qu'un tyran débile,
Qu'un vil automate imbécile,
Esclave de la Dubarry.[2]

Such is the kind of squib that is addressed to the King of France. Jeanne Bécu's head is not swollen by the thought of her power. She goes about in male attire, her shirt open at the neck, in her hail-fellow-well-met way. There is a great deal of the easy-going *bon garçon* in her talk. To her royal lover preparing coffee for her while she is still in bed she calls out: " *Oh ! prends donc garde, la France, ton café f——le camp !*[3] Playing a losing hand at Faro and seeing the fatal card appear, she cries out comically: " *Ah ! je suis frite !* "[4] —an expression unfamiliar in royal circles. That, with all this, she should have made up her mind to enjoy her great

[1] This may be rendered freely: " You go and marry her, old boy ! We'll know what to do about it later. You know I'm immensely interested."

[2] " Thou art nothing more than an enfeebled tyrant, a vile imbecile automaton, a slave of the Dubarry. . . ."

[3] A vulgarly expressed warning that if he doesn't mind out he will spill the coffee.

[4] *Frite* literally means " fried." The phrase may be rendered: " I'm done for ! "

fortune thoroughly, that she should have spent her money with both hands, that in fact she should have squandered it in every direction with such recklessness that people thought her capable of bringing the kingdom to bankruptcy in a few years—all this one can well believe. But it is incorrect to represent her as a cunning and scheming woman, who attained power by means of a thought-out plan, and with the fixed intention of achieving her ends by all means at her disposal.

Now by reason of her character she was destined, we are assured, to become "for the political party which took control of her, the instrument and the slave of numerous and capable ambitions." "She followed in the wake," the *Anecdotes Secrètes* declare, "passive, obedient, allowing herself to be guided, led, ordered, never having any initiative in anything and yet having caused, by her subjection to shameful friends and unworthy ministers, evils which were never to be repaired."

One is astonished that she could ever have passed for a friend of the *philosophes*. From the beginning the Clerical party surrounded her. Hardy's journal leaves us in no doubt whatever: the presentation of the favourite at the Court (February 1769) was greeted by the clergy of Paris as the signal of a new departure in internal policy. "It is to-day," they said, "that takes place the presentation of the new Esther who is to replace Aman (Choiseul) and free the Jewish people (the Jesuits) from oppression." The Encyclopædists had had in the *Petits Cabinets* an ally which ensured their victory; religion was to have such an ally in its turn.

Madame du Barry, as M. Soury says in his *Portraits du XVIII^me^ Siècle*, associated herself with the people of the cabal formed against the Duc de Choiseul, "pious and orthodox people, great friends of the Jesuits and of the Ultramontane clergy, enemies of the *Parlements* and of the *philosophes*. In the belief of the King's daughters, of the Dauphin, and of the Jesuits, Choiseul had formed a plan "for destroying religion from top to bottom." The bishops, Madame Adelaide, *la Carmelite* (Madame Louise de France) and the Dauphine, in short, the entire Clerical party of the Court, were disposed almost to believe that Madame du Barry had been raised up

by God to overthrow the impious Minister and to bring the King back to religion.

At one moment this party exerted itself to get the Pope to dissolve the marriage of the favourite with Guillaume du Barry. In spite of the wishes of the King to the contrary, the party wanted to unite him for his own redemption to this strange variant of a Maintenon.

The King's daughters accorded a most flattering welcome to their father's mistress: on the day of her presentation, they did not wish Madame du Barry to salute them ceremoniously; they all, one after another, took her in their arms and embraced her with a surprising show of affection. Later they did really try to obtain from the Pope an annulment of her marriage with du Barry so that Louis could wed her: the blemish of her birth, the ignominy of her earlier career, vanished before the necessity of combating the enemies of the altar. Would these ends have been attained had Louis lived longer? The King looked with disfavour on the plan, but there was ground for believing that senile sensuality might lead to his compliance and that Esther might in truth become the legal wife of Ahasuerus!

Only it was necessary for Madame du Barry to give guarantees and give them she did. She carried out, point by point, the programme which was drawn up for her. She was the more dangerous to the Minister in that the King felt entirely incapable of mixing himself in public affairs and that she gave to her antipathy "a wild and childish aspect which was very agreeable to Louis XV."

"*Saute, Choiseul!* . . . *Saute, Praslin!*"[1] ("Jump, Choiseul! Jump, Praslin!"), she cried out by turns, the while she threw up an orange first in one of her hands, then in the other. After getting rid of a cook who bore a certain resemblance to the Minister, she had said to the King laughingly: "I have got rid of *my* Choiseul, when will you get rid of *yours*?"

So Choiseul was thrown over, and the disgrace of the "Great Pan," as he was called, was regarded by the Encyclopædists as a disaster and by their enemies as a brilliant victory.

[1] Duc de Praslin, *b.* 1712, *d.* 1785. Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1766-70.

After Choiseul, it was the turn of the *Parlements*. The Minister, continuing the policy of Madame de Pompadour, had leant on them in his contest with the Clerical party and the Jesuits; he had been, perhaps less by taste than by necessity, the natural ally of the magistracy, and that is the reason why he had at first supported La Chalotais against the Duc d'Aiguillon. Madame du Barry, hit at by the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Chancellor, encouraged the King to strike at both *Parlements* once and for all if he wished to put an end to their ceaselessly renewed debates. The *Coup d'État* which was organised by the Chancellor on the night of 21st May 1771 was regarded as a revenge for the expulsion of the Jesuits. All their partisans showed a profound delight, and for the *entourage* of the future Louis XVI., whom the Duc de la Vauguyon had trained in the ideas of his father, the Dauphin, the occasion was a veritable festival and a source of joy which found expression in certain pitiless pleasantries. It is even asserted that de la Vauguyon's pupil went to give his congratulations to his grandfather; he ought on the same occasion to have given them also to his grandmother—*de la main gauche*.

From this point onwards it was felt that the return of the Jesuits was only a question of time: "Many people," wrote Hardy, "thought that an invisible hand, financed by the scattered members of a Society which was proscribed and which was seeking to avenge its destruction in some striking fashion, was pulling secret wires which were working a black cabal in league against the magistracy, the sole support of the law and the sole protectors of the oppressed masses." We may read in M. Masson's work, *Le Cardinal de Bernis depuis son Ministère*, how the intrigues of Madame Louise and her sisters were set on foot to re-establish the Jesuits. In April 1774 the latter were awaiting their resurrection "with the greatest confidence, but with tranquillity." The death of the King (10th May 1774) was to check the hopes of the Clerical party and the plans of the favourite.

It is easy to understand that the Encyclopædists were not satisfied with the part played by Madame du Barry in the

politics of the kingdom. It is true that Voltaire wrote some charming lines to her after learning that she had charged M. de la Borde to kiss him on both cheeks.

> Quoi! deux baisers sur la fin de ma vie!
> Quel passe-port vous daignez m'envoyer!
> Deux! c'en est trop, adorable Egérie,
> Je serais mort de plaisir au premier![1]

A mere exchange of "soft nothings," assuredly—the bantering flattery of an old man. The real feelings of Voltaire and his associates towards the woman who sent the Duc de Choiseul into exile for all the many great and useful things he had done are to be traced elsewhere. More characteristic of the attitude of the *philosophes* generally was the phrase in a letter from Condorcet to Voltaire in which he talked of Madame du Barry and her "rabble"!

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THUS the two last mistresses of Louis XV. deserve to be counted among the authors of the French Revolution: Madame du Barry, by working for the banishment of a Minister who had become popular through his ability in foreign politics, his firmness against the Jesuits, his sympathy with the innovators; also by her share in the blows directed against a *Parlement* which might have developed in strength by reason of the persecutions it had to bear; finally by becoming the instrument of the Clerical party and of the partisans of the Jesuits: Madame de Pompadour, by favouring the new ideas, and protecting their champions and safeguarding them from the snares laid for them by fanatics and from the attacks of the clergy. Both had something to say to the breaking up of the *ancien régime*. Madame du Barry with her delicate hands helped those who saw its imperfections and who were busy constructing an entirely new machine on better and less antiquated lines. Madame de Pompadour alone deserved

[1] Quite literally:

> "What! two kisses at the end of my life!
> What a passport you deign to send me!
> Two! that is too many, adorable Egeria,
> I would die of pleasure of the first!"

gratitude on the part of the Encyclopædists—a gratitude they are to be blamed for not always having shown her—and, without attempting a general defence of the rule of the King's mistress, we are entitled to declare that we, the great-grandsons of those whom she esteemed and championed, in representing her as an ally of the ideas of freedom and humanity, are at last paying the debt which the Encyclopædists owe her memory.

III

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE NOBLES

The French nobility [declares the Marquis de Bouillé in his *Mémoires*] had not only lost their ancient splendour, their very existence was undermined and they were thrown entirely out of joint. There had existed in France nearly eighty thousand families of noble standing. Of this great number about one thousand could trace their origin back to the most remote times of the monarchy. Only two or three hundred out of the thousand had escaped poverty and misfortune. At the Court were still conspicuous some great names which recalled the memory of the great men who had cast glory on them but which had been disgraced by the vices of later inheritors. In the country districts also families were to be found which had survived disasters and had maintained their position in spite of the limitations that had been imposed on the privileges formerly possessed by the nobles; mostly, by contracting alliances with plebeian families in order to repair their fortunes.

Such was the position of the Second Estate of the Realm towards the end of the eighteenth century. We may gather from the above passage how great was the gulf which existed between the nobles of the country regions and those of the Court.

The nobles of the country were a long way from inspiring the respect which had been felt for their predecessors. To begin with they were poor. Barbier depicts for us the life of the *hobereaux* or country esquires mixing with the peasants. "The sons of these nobles," he writes, "spent their young days side by side with the peasants in rustic ignorance, and in most cases turned their property as best they could into money; the only difference was that they carried swords and claimed to be *gentilshommes*."

Those who had any property "to turn into money" were not so badly off, but how many of them were reduced almost to beggary! The States of Brittany distributed alms systematically to those nobles who were in need, and the picture of the existence led by them in their manorial halls all tumbling to ruins is a surprising one. Let us hear what the Abbé Coyer has to say in his book, *La Noblesse Commerçante* (1756), of "this noble class, shackled by impoverishment, upon whom the sun shines only to reveal their miserable condition":

Look at these little farmsteads without cattle on them [he proceeds], these fields either ill-cultivated or going waste; these languishing crops for which a creditor is waiting, judgment order in hand; this *château* which threatens to tumble down upon its owners, a father and a mother who are united only in their tears. What is the use of these symbols of honour which are degraded by want, these armorial bearings fading away from age?

The peasant who sees them near at hand has but little consideration for these poor creatures who boast of their descent from the Crusaders but who have no change of clothes, and it is with malicious relish he gives out the familiar couplet:

C'est un gentilhomme de Beauce
Qui se tient au lit quand on refait ses chausses.[1]

The nobleman without money is also the nobleman without education. He has nothing to talk about but his miserable stock of cattle and his scanty crops, and nobody to talk to but farmers as vacant as himself or the village *curé* who is no whit their superior. . . . Without money and without education these country gentlemen lacked also all political and social influence. The man who held sway in the province was *l'Intendant*, the direct representative of the King of France, outside and above the laws. The Intendants, who at first had acted as a counterpoise to the Governors and Commanders-in-Chief and Lieutenant-Governors of the provinces, had come by degrees to abolish the powers of these functionaries and to an even greater degree the powers of the great nobles. So we learn from Saint-Simon's *Parallèle des Trois Premiers Rois Bourbons*. The Comte de Boulainvilliers, who belonged to the *entourage* of the Duc de Bourgoyne, had foretold in the preface to his *L'État de France* the eventual subjection of the *noblesse* to these magistrates whom it despised but who now did with it what they chose:

The governors of the provinces and of the county towns [he wrote] calculated that their authority and their functions and their sources of profit were going to be taken from them; they were not mistaken. The noble class saw in general that they were about to be thrown into too glaring a light. Those of the class who had deeds of violence or injustice upon their conscience were in fear of

[1] "Here is a gentleman of Beauce who must stay in bed till his breeches are mended."

losing their heads. But even this class of nobles did not see that it was going to be degraded to the point of being reduced to prove its status before new judges, or that it was going to lose its natural authority over its own subjects, to the point, not of being confused with them (for the distinction was allowed to remain), but so abased that the peasants, who originally were not free and owners of their properties except by favour of their lords, should in future have the right to impose the nobles to the villein tax, them and their possessions, and that they would be deprived for ever of their natural rights of directing and controlling the blinded populace.

On the other hand, the Intendants had their champions, not only among the Ministers, but also among all those who saw in their power, entrusted to lawyers, the only means of checkmating the nobles and also—as Saint-Simon put it—" of curbing the power of the bishops in regard to the temporal affairs of their dioceses." Boulainvilliers himself admits the fact that the Intendants had their determined champions.

In the middle of the eighteenth century we find d'Argenson in his turn thus expressing himself: " The Intendants have become the real Governors of the provinces. . . . The authority of the Governors has come down to nothing ; the title now but covers an empty name and is reduced to a pension drawn upon the royal treasure " ; while Mirabeau, in his *Testament Politique*, recommends his successors to wage " a secret and hidden war against the nominees of the Court," whom he characterises as " a kind of shapeless and monstrous magistracy, against which it would be useless and harmful to offer direct resistance." He refers to them contemptuously in his letters as " *ces espèces-là*," and in his *Testament* as " a clique, the object of the aversion of the people and of the notables " ; a clique whose authority " stinks ", etc., etc. This " clique " was in point of fact all-powerful, and neither the notables nor the people nor the bourgeois of the provinces had any grievance against it for having rescued them from the aggression of their lords.

One was always sure of having one's case against one's *seigneur* taken up, if one applied to the Intendant. The peasant felt that he now had protection. Previously it would have been difficult to persuade him that he could bring an action against a noble. " To-day," we read in *Les Soupirs de la France Esclave* (1689-90), " a noble must have an extra strong case if he is to win his suit against a peasant." The plebeian could now

(in 1689) bring the noble up before the courts, and the more he knew about his rights, and the more satisfied he felt that the noble was lacking in influence and wealth, the more tenacious he became, pursuing his adversary to the bitter end. Many were the verdicts given in favour of the peasants. We know from the narrative of Fléchier[1] about the terror of the nobles of Auvergne during the "Great Days." It seems to me unquestionable, indeed, that Fléchier exaggerates. He would have us believe that the peasants insisted on being civilly saluted by their *seigneurs*, and in his spirit of elegant badinage he makes out that they felt they needed to do no more work, as the King no longer had any consideration for any of his subjects save for them. He describes them as "promising their protection to persons of quality" and becoming "through favour the masters of their proper lords" (*seigneurs par privilège de leurs seigneurs mêmes*). The worldly prelate writes jestingly, but the thing to be noted in what he tells us is the fact that the peasant was always ready to give evidence against the nobles "when he was not restrained by fear." Now, he was no longer restrained by fear when he realised that the Intendant was all-powerful and ready to listen to his evidence; and when he saw the lord of the manor taken off to prison at the instance of a neighbour, he became more confident still. "In truth," Montaigne had written at an earlier period, "our laws are easy enough and the weight of the Sovereignty touches a French nobleman scarcely twice in his lifetime." That was no longer true in the eighteenth century. The weight of the Sovereignty could "touch" the nobleman continually. The sword which he carried at his side was now only worn for show. The *sergent seigneurial* who represented him had come to be regarded as a sort of Commissionaire, half bailiff, half beadle, a person on a level with mere servants. The *maréchaussée*, or mounted police of the Intendant, were on the contrary recognised even in the remotest villages as the representatives of the public authority, charged

[1] *B.* 1632, *d.* 1710. The reference is to his work, *Mémoires sur les Grand Jours tenus à Clermont en* 1665. Fléchier was Bishop of Nîmes.

with the duty of safeguarding the welfare of all and putting into execution the decisions of the King's courts. Bit by bit, the serf became used to the idea that the noble was only his equal. I do not believe that during the "Great Days" the peasants ever thought of forcing the noble to "salute him civilly"; but it is certain that at the close of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth they made a point of not saluting the nobles. Before the reign of Louis XIV. they would have been punished for their demeanour by blows from a cane or a riding-whip; during the reign of Louis XIV. they would have been brought before the courts; from that time onwards they incurred no risk. They had no longer to fear either blows or judicial sentences.

As a result of this new condition of things, members of the *noblesse* who still possessed big estates confided them to the care of agents and took up their residence in the capital, there, as Saint-Simon puts it, to look on at a distance on their own decay and at the same time "to try and obtain forms of protection which should force the Intendants to show some consideration for them." The more intelligent and more enterprising of the country gentlemen tried their best to follow suit. They were tired of the humiliating circumstances of their impoverished existence. Accordingly we find them also in Paris, in search of pensions, or of openings for their sons in the Military School or elsewhere. Their dismantled *châteaux* passed into the hands of ambitious bourgeois from the neighbouring towns, men anxious to play the rôle of *grand seigneurs* and at the same time to find a good investment for their money. These people were able sometimes to show themselves less exacting than their predecessors, being better off financially and finding it easier to make ends meet; sometimes, however, they showed a keener eye for profits. On the other hand the peasant took up a position of greater independence in regard to them, for they had not behind them that prestige which results from ancient lineage and which it is easier to mock at than to despise. The peasant regarded them as rich men merely and not as masters. Thus it came about that gradually the nobles were replaced for the most part by mere landed

proprietors and that the only nobles who remained in the provinces were as a rule the most incapable and the most poverty-stricken, and therefore the least to be feared.

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IT might seem from this that had things been allowed to follow their natural course the provincial *noblesse* would have disappeared; but to take this view is to forget a detail of the greatest importance. These nobles, who no longer had either the intelligence or the means to perform their seigniorial duties, still retained their seigniorial rights. Now the rights, when divorced from the duties, lost all sense, all *raison d'être*. We may read in books of history the long lists of feudal services by which the peasants' holdings were weighted down. These services were supposed to repay the noble for actions which he no longer performed. Hence the attacks made upon the system by the *philosophes* and by all those who wished to bring about a state of society in harmony with ideas of reason and justice. Nothing could be hoped for from these country squires, necessarily wedded to their privileges and subsisting upon dues and taxes to which they were no longer entitled. When the Revolution came, the most violent opposition was at once aroused in those regions in which the provincial nobles were still most numerous (in the West, that is, and in the Centre); in the East and in certain regions of the South, where there were a greater number of peasant proprietors than nobles, the Revolution was acclaimed with enthusiasm.

In their historical studies some of the Encyclopædists are to be found investigating into the origin of the *grands-fiefs*, the *arrière-fiefs*, the *censives* and all the other features of feudal jurisprudence: that "impenetrable labyrinth," as Duclos characterises it, "in which it is said that we taught the Lombards to find their way about and which we should have done well to abandon them. The State would have been the richer for it, if the title-deeds had not multiplied the number of estates, if the estates had been charged only with the tribute to the Prince, and if none had been exempt from this common

contribution." We are shown how the policy of the kings consisted in regaining, little by little, all that had been "usurped" in those days "of trouble and of confusion, when force and violence decided everything and when reason and justice had no place of refuge"; and we find the Encyclopædists appealing to the monarchical authority for a solemn revocation of all the prerogatives of the *fiefs*—of all these "customs, fruits of barbarism, most of which obstruct commerce and are opposed to the interests of the population by reason of the unfair division of property."

Gradually the nobles were deprived of those rights which were most unreasonable and most oppressive—that of coining money, for instance, and that of levying villein-taxes or poll-taxes, or any other kind of tribute; while their arbitrary methods of justice were subjected to the rule of the *ressort*, as it was called—that is to say, to the appeal to the King's courts. Only their hunting rights, their seigniorial "tolls," etc., etc., had now to be taken from them. It was, the Encyclopædists urged, for the King of France to accomplish this task, so that there should be a common law for the whole country and that there should be an end to this "surprising multiplicity of customs, the variety of which would make a foreigner believe that the people following them did not live under one and the same government, because they do not recognise the same laws."

We find the question of human dignity brought forward by Duclos in this connection. "When it is the Prince who gives me a judge," he writes, "I must place trust in his judgment and his discernment. The knowledge of the supreme right which resides in him wins my submission without hurting my self-respect; and I have not this feeling of docility towards my equal, a *subject like myself*, who may, through interest or ignorance, nominate for me judges who are alike incapable and unworthy of their functions." The sense in which we must take the word "equal" is clear: what is meant is equality before the King's courts. Duclos does not call for the suppression of the *Tribunal du Seigneur*; he is satisfied to urge that this tribunal should be prevented from giving trouble

" by pretensions which are equally opposed to royal authority, incompatible wth our customs and opposed to society." Elsewhere we shall find him declaring that all feudal rights are intolerable by reason of the " contrast which they present with the royal authority on which alone every subject *who feels the price of liberty* finds it hard not to be dependent." And we have here one more proof of the confidence which the Encyclopædists placed in this royal authority, in whose interest it was to introduce reforms and all the means for enforcing them. Article 2 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man is as follows: " Men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights; social distinctions cannot be founded upon the common welfare." It would have been easy for Louis XV. to take a decisive step towards this equality by suppressing feudal rights at one blow. Duclos suggested that they should be purchased back from those possessing them. To have done so would have been for the King to make a handsome present to the people of France. The time was ripe, and public opinion would have acclaimed it. The People itself was to enforce the reform which the King failed to bring about, but we see how public opinion was formed in advance by the *philosophes*.

La Bruyère, it is only just to add, had been before them: the *philosophes* were his successors but they went beyond his programme. Further, they made it more definite and expanded it. They gave to all the peasants of France, already no respecters of their masters, the conviction that these latter had no more right to their money than to their homage. Thereby the *philosophes* had prepared the way for the emancipation of the rural classes.

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IF these provincial nobles, then, were counted for nothing in the eighteenth century, it was quite otherwise with the nobles of the Court, who contrived to get hold of pensions, honours and dignities at the price of much humiliation and by means of much servility.

What the life of a courtier was under Louis XV. and under Louis XIV. is revealed to us by many trustworthy documents of various kinds which have been published from time to time.

One of the best known is the *Lettre et Instruction Paternelle sur l'État de Courtisan*, addressed to the Comte de Gisors, the only son of the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, by his father-in-law, the Duc de Nivernais. The Comte was then a youth of twenty, and the Duke,[1] himself a perfect gentleman, of an independent and distinguished mind, enlightens him regarding the existence of these courtiers, "more pitiable than lackeys," who are dependent ever upon the smiles of their master. Needless to recall here the innumerable stories told in illustration of the shameless sycophancy of this class. How empty and fatuous was the life even of those more estimable members of it who did at least strive to perform their futile tasks conscientiously! I am thinking of men like De Luynes, that worshipper of etiquette, whom we find regretting the ancient practice of never passing through the King's sleeping-apartment without making an obeisance to the bed, or the royal dining-room without a bow to His Majesty's napkin! This personage of high degree was a good and worthy man, capable of wise judgments and conduct; in a country in which the Second Estate of the Realm performed an efficient rôle in the management of affairs, he might have rendered great services; he bore one of the greatest names in France, he was very rich, he was a man of distinction and the Government had need of such allies. He admonished his son "to bow before the decisions of his superiors without baseness, to rule over his inferiors with justice and gentleness, to have esteem for the virtuous in no matter what class he might find them." These were the tenets which he would have brought into political life. He was, however, condemned by the system created by Louis XIV. to an empty existence as an ornament of the Palace. We see him passing his day, like the correct courtier he is, solemnly preoccupied from morning to night with trifles and bagatelles. He who might well have been in touch with the *entourage* of Fénelon, with all those who were discussing the most original suggestions for the political, religious and economic future of the nation, had to devote his thoughts to the never-ending discussions of eighteen hundred and fifty Court officials (1400

[1] *B.* 1716, *d.* 1798.

of the House of the King, 450 of the House of the Queen) with regard to their functions and petty prerogatives! What an occupation for a mind of even mediocre intelligence—to estimate the correct depths of a curtsy or a bow, to decide how soup should be served, to remember the days when the King weighed himself, to note what medicines the Queen was taking! Of such trivialities his memoirs are full. . . .[1]

Among the many pamphlets dealing with this subject may be mentioned the satire from the pen of Rochon de Chabannes, entitled *La Noblesse Oisive*[2]; in its quizzical way it is an exposition of the ideas of the nobility. The nobility, it pleads, has two functions: to die on the battle-field and to ruin itself at the Court. To these two things all the duties of a citizen are reduced for it. No wonder if d'Argenson should write severely: "The nobility would seem to consist only of the drones in the hive, who eat the honey and do no work." The contrast between the aristocracy of France and that of England at this epoch was pointed out by a French resident in England, who remarked that England was "in reality a republic which had a Doge and a bastard town-dwelling nobility." A "bastard" nobility is one which is renewed from the eminent men of the nation, from among those famous in industry, commerce, the sciences, philosophy, literature and the arts; the pure-blooded nobility is that which meets death in battle or else lies idle. Such was the contrast between that English aristocracy which Macaulay defines as "the most democratic aristocracy in the universe" and the aristocracy of France which, whatever else may be thought about it, has been the most exclusive of any in the world.

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IT may without much difficulty be imagined what the conduct of the *philosophes* was in regard to the nobles of the Court. Their books are full of violent attacks upon the titled flunkeys whom they despised and whose ill-will they braved. "They fear us," says Duclos, "as thieves fear the light." Duclos himself, however, was in close relations with the nobles

[1] Some pages of the French are here omitted.
[2] *Oisive* = idle, indolent.

of real distinction, and we find him writing to Rousseau: "Men of letters should expect friendship only from their equals and from those whose rank is far above them."

Duclos is thinking of the type of noble who is able to perform his duties towards his sovereign without self-abasement and who, by his birth and influence, is important enough for the King to treat him as a counsellor if not as a collaborator. The nobleman of this type, when he had talent for soldiering or for administration, sought indeed the favour of the King, but did not go to the Court with any notion of abiding there; on the contrary, he went thither, fully intending to get away again as quickly as possible. He returned to it regularly so as to keep himself in mind, but he did not suffer himself to be shut up in Versailles. He spent his time partly in Paris in his own house, partly in his *château* in the country. He had his circle of cultured friends and in their company learned to know and appreciate the *philosophes*.

I am not thinking now of the Marquis d'Argenson, who was on the side of the *philosophes* before ever their great struggle began; I have in mind, however, many other great names continually met with in this connection. The Comte de Ségur has a famous page in his *Mémoires* which may be cited appropriately here. It reflects the feelings of the more enlightened members of his own class at the time:

> As for us, the young nobles of France, who harboured no regrets as to the past and felt no disquietude as to the future, we trod along gaily over a carpet of flowers which covered over an abyss. . . . The smiling philosophy of Voltaire amused us and captivated us. Without getting at the depths of the more serious writers, we admired them also for the courage with which they stood up against arbitrary power. . . . We felt disposed to follow enthusiastically the philosophical doctrines taught by these witty and daring men of letters: Rousseau touched our hearts; we experienced a secret pleasure in seeing them attack the ancient edifice, which seemed to us Gothic and absurd. And so, despite our rank and all its privileges and the fact that it was the time-honoured power of our own class that was being undermined, this petty warfare tickled us. . . . The idea of liberty, whatever form of expression might be given to it, pleased us by reason of its courage—the idea of equality by reason of its convenience. There is a pleasure in descending when one thinks one can ascend again at any moment; and without prescience we enjoyed at once the advantages of patricians and the comforts of a plebeian philosophy.

There is but one correction to be made in this: in reality, these nobles, while partaking in the generous conception of the *philosophes*, were far from "descending." Their prestige was to be greatly benefited in the eyes of posterity by the circumstance of their having furnished auxiliaries to the army of liberal thinkers. What other kind of triumph could the nobles have looked for to lend glory to those years of decadence? The *noblesse* was the victim of the political system introduced by Louis XIV. and, when it did emerge from its inaction, it merely added one more item to our list of military defeats. Most of its members were sunk in debts, living without virtue and without repute. Happily for it, it numbered also a few large minds and courageous hearts capable of rising above the prejudices of centuries and of welcoming the champions of justice and freedom, even when these new ideas threatened their own privileges. They allowed themselves to be disarmed by reason, and gave their free adherence to the principles which were to regenerate society and to guide the builders of the new world upon the ruins of the old castes. . . .

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THAT, without a doubt, is the verdict of posterity. Let us look, in *L'Anneau d'Améthyste*, at the chapter which shows us M. de Brécé leading M. Lerond round the room in which the Duc Guy, Marshal of France, had set up his library towards 1605. Begun by the Marshal, this library had been much enriched by his grandson, the Duc Jean, and M. Lerond reads aloud the titles printed in gold lettering upon these volumes collected by a great noble of the time of Louis XV. *Encyclopédie Méthodique*, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Malby, Condillac, Raynal—these are the favourite reading of the Duc Jean de Brécé, who with his own hand has annotated the *Vœux d'un Solitaire*; M. Lerond reads out one of the notes to it: "The author is quite right; men are by nature good. It is the false principles of Society which makes them bad." M. Lerond is shown now the books collected by M. de Brécé's grandfather under Charles X.: Chateaubriand, Anquetil, Guizot, Thierry, La Harpe, Merchangy, Lainé. Finally, he sees those

which have been added by the present Duke: two or three untidy-looking pamphlets dealing with Pius IX. and the Temporal Power; two or three tattered novels; a panegyric on Joan of Arc by Monseigneur Charlot; and some devotional books by ladies of position. I would ask in all sincerity whether if the Duc Jean de Brécé in the reign of Louis XV. had confined himself to the same kind of reading as his successor, the Member of the National Assembly of 1871, as revealed in 1899 by M. Anatole France, the French aristocracy of that period would not have appeared to us a caste which deserved to disappear entirely by reason of its lack of intelligence, its egoism, and its vanity?

It is the nobles of the type of that Jean de Brécé who prevent us from feeling for the aristocracy of the eighteenth century, as it really was, the contempt poured out upon it by its contemporary censors. Vauvenargues himself, who is one of the strongest champions of the need and value of a hereditary nobility, accuses those eighteenth-century nobles of "frivolity," "arrogance," "courtier-like pusillanimity," "lack of humanity," "contempt of the people," and all the vices which explain their irremediable fall. Montesquieu, whose principle is: "No monarch, no nobility; no nobility, no monarch, but a despot," admits that he had at first "a puerile fear" of most of the nobles, but that from this he had passed almost at once to a feeling of scorn for them. At the other end of this century the Baron de Besenval[1] wrote: "The aristocracy did not deserve to be taken into consideration in any political reflection," while Rivarol[2] did not hesitate to declare: "The nobles of to-day are only the ghosts of their ancestors." How would it be, then, if, instead of taking the views of those who had something to say for the nobles, we were to go to those who laid bare their crimes and shortcomings? To the Marquis d'Argenson, for instance, who maintains that "the nobles are to the people what rottenness is to fruit"; or to Chamfort, who so constantly and implacably condemned the whole class? One consideration alone causes us to revise these severe judg-

[1] *B.* 1722, *d.* 1791. Author of important *Memoirs*.
[2] *B.* 1759, *d.* 1801.

ments—namely, the knowledge that the nobles supplied some brilliant and generous patrons to the ideas whence the Revolution evolved. The " imprudence " of these men was disastrous only to their immediate interests, and it should save their order from being indiscriminately condemned.

IV

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE MAGISTRATES

MONTESQUIEU, in comparing the two nobilities which are the essential constituents of "monarchical government—a government, that is, where one person governs by means of fundamental laws"—enumerates the services rendered to the realm by the *état de la Robe*, standing between the nobility and the people, "which has all the privileges of the former without the glitter," and which is collectively illustrious, as the depository of the laws, although its individual members remain mediocre.

Thus we have the "nobility of the *Robe*" standing equidistant from the nobility, who despise it from of old, and the bourgeoisie, who respect or fear it.

In Duclos' novel, *Les Confessions du Comte de* ***, the picturesque gallant who chronicles his own easy and monotonous conquests tells how he came to know one of the *Parlement*[1] judges. The occasion was a dispute about some property. Montesquieu's reference to a calling which leaves its followers mere mediocrities should be understood to apply to the

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[1] It may be helpful to the English reader to cite here an enlightening passage from Mr E. J. Lowell's *The Eve of the French Revolution* (published in 1892): "While the greater and more conspicuous part of the French nobility lived by the sword, a highly respectable portion of the order wore the judicial gown. Prominent in French affairs we find the Parliaments, a branch of the old feudal courts of the Kings of France, retaining the function of high Courts of Justice and playing, moreover, a certain political part. In the Parliament of Paris, on solemn occasions, sat those few members of the highest nobility who held the title of Peers of France. With these came the legal hierarchy of First President, presidents *à mortier* (*i.e.* wearing a cap so called) and counsellors numbering about two hundred. The members were distributed, for the purposes of ordinary business, among several courts, the great Chamber, five courts of Request, two courts of Petitions, etc. The Parliament of Paris possessed original and appellate jurisdiction over a large part of central France—too large a part for the convenience of suitors—but there were provincial parliaments set over other portions of the kingdom. The members of these courts, and of several other tribunals of inferior jurisdiction, formed the magistracy, a body of great dignity and importance."

personal influence of the individual magistrates in question, since, from the point of view of money, magistrates were anything but mediocrities, the "*robins*," as they were called, being often much wealthier than lords. The Count had, then, a dispute over some land with one of these magistrates whose existence he, as became one of his rank, had ignored. The magistrate settles the affair quite in *grand seigneur* fashion, for lawyers benefit by their profession and "learn at others' expense to avoid law suits." The settlement leaves the two men friends, and the Count's first proof of this new relationship is to try to seduce the magistrate's wife; "and," he adds, with his usual fatuity, "I succeeded." Thus we see him launched in magisterial circles, forced to "bow to a new code of manners absolutely foreign to him." But he shall speak for himself:

> Most of the gentlemen of the long *Robe* are driven in upon their own kind, and this narrowed intercourse feeds their pride. They abuse Court people without ceasing, affecting to despise them, although they are for ever harping on the names of any to whom they are related. Not a man of title dies but half the *Robe* goes into mourning. There's an obligation they fulfil to the last detail, whereas you rarely see a magistrate in mourning for his cousin the barrister. . . . Generally speaking, the *Robe* overrates itself and is underrated by others. Its women, who mix only with their own class, have either no knowledge of the world or are wrong in the little they do know. Problems of etiquette form their only occupation, hatred and envy their sole dissipation.

If we proceed to detach the essential features of Montesquieu's sketch, we shall see that he depicts the law as separate from the rest of the world—from the Court, from finance, and from the bourgeoisie. In spite of marriage with the great aristocratic families on such a scale that every lawyer managed to be more or less in mourning when any distinguished nobleman disappeared; in spite of marriage with the rich, which might have brought the magistrates into close touch with financiers and the bourgeois, the nobility of the *Robe* formed an isolated caste, closed to outsiders, a sort of judicial clergy holding aloof from the profane, and officiating in the severe solemnity of their luxurious and imposing interiors into which none but a magistrate might penetrate. The financier or bourgeois who buys an office ceases to be financier or bourgeois; for, from that day, he belongs to the law and can only be on

good terms with his colleagues on condition of intercourse with lawyers exclusively. The legal nobility has its distinct grades, too, concerning which a rigid etiquette is observed. The men insist on it as part of their prerogative; the women are even more zealous. On grand ceremonial occasions they cling jealously to the order of precedence, fixed by the rank of their husbands, and enforce it no less strictly in their own handsome, dignified *salons*, where they give audiences rather than receptions. The sense of caste is more powerful in the magistrature than anywhere else. Indeed, this aristocracy of office is perhaps more exclusive than the other aristocracy; it insists more obstinately on its privileges, is haughtier towards outsiders, and more intolerant of any reforms which, in redressing grievances, would place restrictions on its own interests as a class—those interests that seem to it to be linked with, and even superior to, the interests of the State.

This sense of caste, which manifested itself in the smallest details of everyday life, was bound to arouse widespread hostility towards the *Parlements* on the part of those who were striving to establish a reign of reason and equality. The nobility of the Gown lived to a great extent on abuses, and was determined to perpetuate these, conceding nothing. This alone was enough to cause enmity among the men who wanted abuses suppressed and privileges abolished. The ill effects of the sale of charges have already been pointed out. Montesquieu, however, favoured its continuance in monarchical states "because it ensures things which no one would care to undertake from a sense of duty being done with the order and method customary in regulating family affairs, and it appoints each man to his allotted task, bringing permanency into the offices of the State." "In a monarchy where there is no public sale of offices, and the traffic is in the hands of indigent and greedy courtiers, any selection would be better than a prince's. Finally, the method of advancement through riches stimulates and supports industry, and this is a matter of extreme importance to a monarchical government." Those who sought to defend the sale of magisterial offices made use of all these arguments; but while they admitted that the system had been

introduced solely to create revenues for the kings, who saw in it a purely fiscal measure, and while they recognised also its detrimental effect on the dignity of the judicial body, they yet attempted to prove that great benefits had accrued to the magistrature and to the State from this tainted source. Others, on the contrary, established by means of actual documents and an assemblage of facts their view—that the opinion of the author of *L'Esprit des Lois* (which was that of Richelieu also) could not stand against serious criticism.

The public were the first to suffer from the system. After the Revolution had attempted to abolish the sale of charges and of ministerial offices (attorneys, clerks, notaries) the practice was re-established, for these classes at least, by a financial law passed in 1816; and attorneys, clerks and notaries continued to exploit their offices by a method of banking interest on the money that had been advanced at the same time as that on the " disbursements " necessary to their " family calling." We have only to imagine all our judges, without exception, doing the same, and we shall have an approximate idea of the results of this traffic under the old regime.

I say approximately, for the ingenious art of multiplying pettifogging formalities, producing unexpected complications, and dragging out a case for months at a time solely to pile up the expenses was at that time carried to its highest pitch. It must be remembered, too, that petty officials, agents, writers, clerks, and other parasites living by chicanery existed in far greater numbers than to-day. The number of subordinate agents attached to the Paris *Parlement* alone was placed at 3000, and these all gained a good living—and the people knew it. And then, times were hard, a judge would say, using the argument of a tradesman for whom times are always hard. The value of offices had doubled: a judge's, which could have been had for 25,000 or 30,000 *livres* in 1712, was worth 60,000 in 1747, and went on increasing in proportion as the *Parlement's* political rights became established. Then again, receipts were taxed in the eighteenth century at 10 per cent.; there was the head-tax, " which might be doubled according to circumstances," and, adds M. Carré, " wages are lowered " at a time when

other commodities are dearer. Yet a judge's "dues" or "fees"[1] represented a reasonable interest, one would think, on the 60,000 *livres* deposited. Some magistrates had large fortunes, no doubt, but not all. There were some who did more work than their colleagues and they certainly did not work so hard for nothing.

Taking it all in all the profession was a good one. There were the revenues, and there was the influence by which the succession could be secured to a son. And so we get hereditary legislature as a result of corrupt practices. Judges of seventeen or eighteen, complete with their bachelors' and licentiates' diplomas, but without necessarily knowing any law, are primed with a few elementary ideas by barristers who boast of their services to these magistrates with their bought deeds of office. Such recruits were obviously not of the right kind, and Montesquieu deluded himself in assuming that the independence of the magistrates would prevent the encroachment of power on the part of royalty and its agents. The *Parlement* as a body could, in fact, make a stand against absolutism at a given moment, but its individual members were no more heroically-minded than any other highly-placed persons who depended on ministerial support for either themselves or their kinsmen. We are speaking now very generally. In Paris, Maupeou met with unshakeable resistance; in the first place he had personal enemies in the opposite ranks who detested him; then, too, the highest-placed magistrates carried the doubtful ones with them and those who might have weakened were held back by a natural sense of shame and bashfulness. Finally, the general state of ferment was such that no one could draw back. But at Besançon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Rennes, and other towns, magistrates, on taking their places in the new courts, were in most cases cheered by the public. Venality had not proved to be a guarantee of independence in these instances!

Voltaire also raises his voice in hot protest against Montesquieu's theory and protests eloquently against the sale of charges:

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[1] Dues or fees—*i.e.* which he received from litigants.

Is then a monarchy, according to Montesquieu, to be founded on nothing but vices? How is it that France is the only monarchy in the world to be sullied with this taint of corruption? . . . To sell justice openly and then to make a judge swear that he has not bought it—this is foolishness and sacrilege.

He had always attacked this "sale of offices, a miserable device by which citizens lose the spirit of rivalry and by which kings are deprived of one of a monarch's greatest prerogatives." We know how enthusiastically he welcomed Maupeou's reform at a later date, and we shall presently see why. He and his friends read with joy the official notification in which Maupeou had had recorded the following:

We decided that the sale of offices, which was instituted in a time of distress, stood in the way of the selection of our officials, and frequently drove away from the magistrature those who, by their talents and their merits, were most worthy of it; and, further, that we owed to our subjects a justice that should be prompt, pure, and free, and that the slightest taint of interest could not but injure the delicacy of the magistrates charged with the maintenance of the inviolable rights of personal honour and of property.

It would have been strange, all the same, had the doctrines of the *philosophes* made no breach in the ranks of the legal nobility, when the time came. However complete the isolation which it pleased the magistrature to maintain, there were members of that body who, feeling the need of more piquant and varied distractions, emulated Duclos' hero and frequented fashionable boudoirs and *salons* instead of enduring boredom in the austere drawing-rooms of the lawyers. Some of them went still further, and the gossip of the period gives us anecdotes in which judges, and even their superiors in office, figure as libertines; and these gentlemen can hardly plead their tender years as an excuse for such frolics.

Things had changed since La Bruyère's time. "The magistrate," wrote the moralist, "who is a fop or a gallant is worse in the long run than a dissolute fellow"; and he returns time after time to the dangers which surround a well-bred legal dignitary in society, particularly women's society. At least one could, at that epoch, "force magistrates to be grave in demeanour and make themselves respected" by "regulating their outward appearance" in accordance with

certain limitations, prohibiting excessive elegance in dress, notably the wearing of cravats instead of neckbands and of grey coats instead of black—to both of which irregularities they were addicted. La Bruyère, bourgeois and Parisian, declared further that " it was impossible for a man of the *Robe* to dance at a ball or appear in a theatre without wilfully lowering himself." But fashion proved too strong for prejudices and rulings. Abbé Coyer tells us, in the *Année Merveilleuse*: " I had to consult a twenty-five-year-old judge. . . . He was being dressed and I stayed to watch the performance, which took up more than the time needed for my business. I supposed he must have an appointment with a duchess whom he wished to outdo in curls and perfumes." It is hardly surprising if " these male creatures, wearing earrings, doing fancy-work, giving audiences in bed at midday, breaking off a serious speech to talk to a dog, conversing with themselves in a mirror, falling into a fury over a broken china figure, fainting over a sick parrot—in fact, stealing from the opposite sex all its airs and graces," were models of amiability rather than of professional probity. Although indeed, as has been said, there were other judges of quite a different order. Mirabeau asserts, in *L'Ami des Hommes*, that this was the class " in which the old disinterestedness of the French was best preserved," and d'Argenson, that " the magistrature is by its habits more worthy of esteem than any other section of the nation "; but in the *Considérations sur les Mœurs* we find again the criticisms which were launched in *Les Caractères* against magistrates on the score of their amiability, foppishness and gallantry. Duclos' particular complaint is that they are idle and try to get on in any and every way except that of study and hard work; above all, that they are neither conscientious not impartial.

But once the magistrates began to mix with society, they were bound to meet the *philosophes* and men of letters and to be converted now and again to the new ideas. Not all of them were content to play the fool in *salons* or revel in dainty suppers. Abbé Coyer's judge is evidently incapable of taking an interest in anything beyond his faithful and worthy companion the parrot, but more than one of his colleagues went out into

society for a worthier purpose than the mere satisfaction of airing their lace or their finery. Hénault is the friend of Voltaire; Servan and Dupaty are Encyclopædists; de Castilhon, de Montclar, and la Chalotais are allied with the *philosophes* against the Jesuits. These are exceptions, we admit; we shall see that they did not suffice to change the state of mind of the magistrature, which remained obstinately opposed to innovators and their doctrines. It was not to be expected that any such reformation would be accomplished in the space of a few years. There was nevertheless a moment when hopes of it were entertained, and the *philosophes* really believed in its accomplishment. We shall see later that Voltaire, who always distrusted the *Parlements* and gives his reasons at every step, had also his hour of hope in which a tolerant, philosophical nobility of the *Robe*, entirely in accord with the ideas and reforms that he upheld, seemed possible. He was to pay dearly to his *bourgeois tyrants* for this temporary relaxation of his antipathy, but it is interesting to note that such an illusion was even possible. Philosophy made a conquest of the young judges, who read the Encyclopædists, sent their oratorical prose to the Paris newspapers, and visited the *salons* in person, whence they emerged, fêted and flattered, as important, high-minded personages, determined to support the reform party. It was not only the younger men who came out in this way; quite venerable judges, indeed, subscribed to the *Encyclopédie* and had no hesitation in joining in or listening to discussions on the reform of civil and criminal law. Times had changed. Evidently the main body of the *Parlement* army held obstinately aloof from the philosophical movement; but, undeniably, there were many deserters—and this was an astounding phenomenon in a body where a mistaken idea of solidarity weighed heavily on each individual, and it was as much as one's life and reputation were worth to show approval of the smallest change in the traditional organisation. . . .

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IT is no part of our intention to go over the whole story of the stand made by the *Parlements* in the eighteenth century, and it is only as a reminder of the magistrates' alliance with the

philosophes and as a help in defining the extent of that alliance that we shall hark back to facts which have long been known—and thoroughly known.

We have to make ourselves see, if possible, the kind of perpetual fury by which Paris and all France were shaken during the interminable "*billets de confession*" affair, 1751-1758. To make an end of Jansenism,[1] which the efforts of Louis XIV. had failed to put down, the bishops attempted to force those desiring the use of the Sacraments to present a certificate, signed by an approved priest; at the same time confessors were ordered never to grant absolution to a man who was not a formal adherent of the Bull *Unigenitus*.[1] This double measure unchained a succession of bitter and oft-told struggles. What can never be sufficiently emphasised, though, is the rage with which men fought, trampled on and tore each other, although this stands out more and more clearly as one reads the memoirs of the period. Barbier, a lawyer, has recorded in several places incidents in this life-and-death struggle. "The whole of the priesthood, the greater part of the bourgeoisie, of the *Robe* and the *Tiers-État*, and even—which is the funny part of it—the women and the people, all these are let loose against the Jesuits and rage in secret over their doings. . . . Women, children, even the little serving-maids, are ready to tear them to pieces." Now none of these people —"men, women, children"—knew anything about the theological disputes, according to our bourgeois, but, "without knowing what it was about," they are enraged against "the Court of Rome and the Jesuits." A mandate, posted at the corner of Saint-Severin, is covered up by a paper, fixed on with two seals by a woman and bearing the words: "True Christians will not accept the Constitution, however much they are persecuted." *Ce que femme veut, le diable le veut.* The mandates are torn off with such fury that "the stone gets scratched"; at Saint-André the spot where the announcement is posted

[1] Issued by Clement XI. in 1713, at the instigation of Louis XIV., this Bull denounced Jansenism as pernicious and heretical. It was revived and incorporated in the French constitution by Louis XV., 1752.

is covered with mud—" which," adds Barbier, " shows what the Jansenist mind is like." At Sainte-Croix de la Cité the *curé* promises his assistant priest not to speak about the mandate of the Archbishop of Vintimille, who favoured the Constitution, but, while the assistant is saying High Mass, the *curé* mounts the pulpit for the sermon and begins to talk about the mandate. Thereupon the former leaves the altar, hastens to disrobe and, leaving his flock without a word of warning, crosses the frontier and makes straight for Utrecht, his prompt action saving him no doubt from an uncomfortable time. The scandal that ensued may be imagined. For joking on these matters a mendicant Capucine friar is put in prison; an Irish priest who, when prayers for a " *bienheureux Paris* " are in question, cries " As well pray to God for one of the damned! " is almost torn in pieces and only escapes with his life by being hustled out through the sacristy.

And here is worse still. A cobbler named Nivelet interrupts the *curé* of Saint-Benoît in the middle of the service, attempts to argue with him, and is lodged in the Bastille for his pains. At Saint-André a priest acts in the same manner, inveighing against his colleague who is conducting the evening service, calling him " ill-informed and a preacher of Calvinistic and Lutheran heresies," and gets him clapped into prison. A haberdasher of the Rue Saint-Jacques and his sister are arrested for posting and distributing openly, in the Tuileries, placards with the words: " Long live the King. Death to the Constitution and its supporters! "

On Whit-Sunday, at Chablis, the priest who is administering Holy Communion sees at the table two declared Jansenists. He calls to them: "*Foris, canes!*"—"Out, dogs!" But they do not budge; and the priest, with the Host in his hand, turns towards the altar to ask God's pardon for being forced to give Holy Communion to the unworthy. " There are plenty of idiots here," concludes Barbier, " and Paris is full of Jansenists of every description." Another ecclesiastic arrests the famous preacher, Père Ségaud, at Saint-Gervais, with the words: " Dog of a preacher! Go and preach your rotten doctrine where no one will be taken in by it." As for the priests who

abandoned their churches and left these people without any religious ceremony, rather than make obeisance to the Bull, their name is legion. At Saint-Médard all the priests vanish at once; there is no one to bury the dead even. The sacristan slips away with the rest, taking the keys of the sacristy with him, and the churchwardens lodge a complaint at the Bar, appealing to justice for someone to say Mass the following Sunday.

One can understand that these fanatics would face death sooner than yield, and that the conflicts which arose were innumerable. Some cases became celebrated. That of M. Coffin, principal of Beauvais College for forty years, may serve as an example. M. Coffin, at the point of death, asks for a confessor and the request is refused. His nephew brings a complaint before the First President, who sends him on to the Archbishop. The Archbishop objects on the score of there being no certificate of confession, and refuses the Sacrament. In the midst of these discussions the Principal dies, and we are confronted with the preposterous spectacle of this man—a saint, by common consent—being treated as a heretic by the Jesuit party and threatened with non-Christian burial, while the same priests who refuse him the Communion continue to sing the numerous hymns which he wrote for the *Bréviaire de Paris*. The matter is not allowed to rest there, as may be imagined, and the process that ensues runs to quite a number of acts and scenes.

It is the same with all analogous cases, of which there was a constant stream. And this being so, what is the attitude of the *Parlements*? The clergy insist on "*billets de confession*"; the magistrates order the ecclesiastics, on pain of banishment, confiscation, and even the galleys for life, "to grant Communion to the petitioners when asked for in due form"; in case of a refusal, the petitioner is to demand admission to Communion through the medium of a bailiff. The viaticum-bearer entrenches himself behind the *curé*, the *curé* behind the bishop, the bishop behind the Church. Then (the method of procedure is quite regular) the Court issues a writ against the bishop in person and, if he persists in refusing to recognise the cognisance

of the *Parlement*, a judgment by default sentences him to exile—or, if the Minister wishes to save him from exile, to banishment from his own diocese. Naturally, the bishops raise a great disturbance. The magistrates are bombarded with mandates, pastoral instructions, letters, etc., all of which they have burnt by the hangman. Thus does the *Parlement* stand out for the secular authority in religious affairs against Ultramontane pretensions, and, without truce or mercy, fights the bishops step by step. Each of its acts is greeted by a public manifestation in favour of the magistrates and a launching of couplets, pamphlets, and violent—sometimes filthy—satires against the tyrannical defenders of the Bull. I pass quickly over the principal episodes of this *fronde*—a far more tumultuous one than the other—the "*lits de justice*,"[1] the resignation of the magistrates, their exile and the triumphal ovations which greeted "the true Romans, fathers of the country," after each blow that fell.

We are chiefly concerned to know whether the *Parlements* rendered service to the cause of philosophy. M. Houssaye writes: "This conflict was puerile if we look upon it purely as a question of Jansenism; no one would turn a hair for these obscure questions of indulgences to-day. But the issue underlying the antagonism of the two doctrines was liberty of conscience, and the *Parlements* did themselves honour in defending it." There is a slight ambiguity here, however, which it will be well to clear up. I prefer, for instance, M. Flammermont's point of view as expressed in his *Le Chancelier Maupeou et les Parlements*: "The *Parlements* had acquired great and legitimate popularity by rejecting the *Constitution Unigenitus* and defending *liberty of conscience, at least for the Jansenists as against the Ultramontanes*." Let us note particularly these last words. The *Parlements* would have been astonished to hear that they were defending liberty of conscience; actually they were defending their own canonical claims against papal authority; the rights of the King of France against those of the Holy See, and lastly, Jansenism, which had the sympathy of the

[1] The sittings of the *Parlement* of Paris in the King's presence.

magistrates, against Ultramontanism, which had that of the clergy. Very great importance obviously attaches to the "*billets de confession*" war. Yet we have Lanfrey setting forth the exasperation of clergy and *Parlements*, portraying the "Lilliputian minutiæ" of the struggle, showing us the spectacle of a powerful nation's two great divisions fighting each other with writs, curses and calumnies, telling of priests imprisoned, bishops banished, magistrates exiled—"all these inviolabilities abusing each other and wrangling in public places"; and then, after inquiring into the cause of this tempest (which shook the monarchy itself), drawing the following conclusions: "What was it all about? Was it to save the State? No. It was to find out whether a priest had the right to insist on a '*billet de confession*' before administering the Last Sacrament to the sick. Truly this is supremely comic." No; it is not supremely comic. Neither are the ecclesiastics and the *Parlementaires* grotesque, for they realise on both sides, even as we realise from their blind fury, that the battle arose out of, and went on raging for, quite other issues than "Lilliputian minutiæ." But we must not fall into the other mistake of regarding the *Parlementaires* as the apostles of liberty of conscience because they defended the 91st proposition of Quesnel: "We should not shrink from doing our duty for fear of being (unjustly) excommunicated." "This sentiment," declares Lanfrey, "is the golden ring which binds Jansenism to eighteenth-century philosophy; for in proclaiming independence of conscience they also proclaimed independence of thought." Now the *Parlementaires* had neither so lofty nor so wide a vision. The Jansenism of the *Parlements*, far from being bound to philosophy by a golden ring, was at war with those who boasted of free thinking. The ecclesiastics, at enmity with the magistrates to-day, will be in league with them to-morrow, and their disagreements will be smoothed over when it comes to dealing with their common enemy, the Encyclopædist party; those very men who had the bishops' pious works burned at the foot of the grand staircase by the hangman will have impious works of the *philosophes* destroyed on the same spot.

The truth is that they were, quite involuntarily, in the ranks

of those who hastened the day of triumph for tolerance, though it is only right to add that they chose to serve the cause of temporal as opposed to physical power. We have seen how they upheld the rights of royalty and, subsequently, the nation, against the Holy See. Throughout their history we see them consistently opposing the introduction into the kingdom of any Act from the Court of Rome without the necessary authorisation. They suppress this or that pastoral letter from the Pope. At Aix, in 1765, they have a pastoral letter from Clement XIII. burned; two years later they prohibit the "superstitious ceremony" of the *Sacré-Cœur de Jésus* celebrations, which had already been suppressed in Tuscany. They protect French liberties. We have seen to what extent they prepared the way for philosophy. From the point of view of religion, it may be said that they carried out a minimum programme, which was indeed all that was wanted at that epoch. For the people of France were Catholic through and through; they made no pretence of a tolerant attitude towards Protestants, and it required all the education in philosophy of the second half of the eighteenth century to familiarise them with this notion of religious tolerance, which even in our own day is not thoroughly acclimatised with us. Even Voltaire was subject to fits of intolerant rage.

But, for all their Catholicism, there were certain abuses practised by the Church which the people—religious and even superstitious as they might be—would not suffer gladly. They were not willing to see the clergy, who owned a third of the kingdom, evade their legitimate share of taxation by presenting a round sum of some millions; they resented their power to escape from the secular arm of the law at any time, and above all they hated the Ultramontanes, who by virtue of their doctrine secretly asserted the supremacy of Rome over the Crown. If priests were insulted in the streets, it was not as priests but as instruments of ecclesiastical despotism.

In so far then did the *Parlements* indirectly co-operate with the *philosophes* by upholding this point of view; their temerity went no further than to defend the liberties of the national Church. I say "national" advisedly; it is the very expression

used by d'Argenson, who has, to my mind, defined with extreme accuracy the lines of the struggle between the "nationals" and "sacerdotals." At most the magistrates could be taken to represent civil and lay power in opposition to the Papacy, and to that extent they aided the new men whom they had served, but at whom they were later to strike.

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IT is clear, on the other hand, that the *Parlements* made themselves more popular, and also pleased the *philosophes*, by prosecuting the Jesuits. Their zeal in this matter may be accounted for by the hatred which the magistrates, as a secular body, felt for the Order, and by the passionate desire of the *Parlement* and Jansenist opposition to have its revenge on the triumphant Ultramontanes.

But we need not suppose that the *philosophes* were under any illusions as to the *Parlements*' motives.

> The *Parlements* [writes Voltaire in *Le Siècle de Louis XV.*] condemned them only for certain of their rules which the King might have reformed; these maxims were horrible enough, but it must be remembered that they were already discredited, being preached mainly by foreign Jesuits, the French having publicly disavowed them some little time before. In these big movements there is always an apparent pretext and a real cause underneath. The pretext for the Jesuit persecution was the pretended danger of their evil books —which in fact no one read.

The real cause, according to Voltaire, was to be sought elsewhere:

> It was not Sanchez, Lessius, Escobar, or the ridiculous casuists who ruined the Jesuits; it was Le Tellier and the Bull Unigenitus which exterminated them throughout almost the whole of France. They are reaping to-day the harvest sown by Le Tellier when he drove a plough over the ruins of Port-Royal sixty years ago.

It was not the *Parlement* therefore that undid the Jesuits, but the Bull Unigenitus. It would certainly have been difficult for Voltaire to deny the skill and vigour displayed by the *Parlements* against the enemy common to themselves and his own party. Yet the *philosophes* were a little uneasy; they could not mistake this Jansenist effort for a straining after free thought and they sensed an element of danger and discouragement

in this religious revival which stirred up all the fanatics whom philosophy was powerless to reform or to get rid of. "Controversy," says the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, "is undoubtedly prejudicial to all the religions that it boasts of upholding, all the laws that it pretends to elucidate, and above all to the spirit of concord that it has banished from earth all down the ages." But controversy had come to life again in connection with the Jesuit theologians, their subtleties and problems, and, as in Pascal's day, insoluble problems were passionately discussed. "This has been our way of reasoning for the last fifteen or sixteen centuries," says Voltaire again, speaking of the "*Démoniaques*"; "yet we presume to laugh at Kaffirs! *These are words that I may often have occasion to repeat.*" He did often repeat them, and so did his friends when they were confronted with the spectacle of men who, in this age of reasoned thinking, could wrangle with stubborn fury over centuries-old questions of dogma exactly as if they were back in the Middle Ages, the "Gothic" centuries. What must have been the feelings of the Encyclopædists, for instance, on reading over the theological preamble to the Paris *Parlement's* famous decree of 6th August 1762?

Seeing that the tenets of the Society are "favourable to the schism of the Greeks; hostile to the dogma *de la procession du Saint Esprit*; favourable to Arianism, Socinianism, Sabellianism, Nestorianism; that they disturb belief in doctrines on the hierarchy, sacrificial rites, and the sacrament; that they repeat the heresy of Wycliffe and revive the errors of Tribonius, Pelagius, Cassi, Faust the Marseillais, etc., etc."

No wonder that Lanfrey remarks: "If the Jesuits deserve expulsion, what should be the punishment of judges like these?" It might be Voltaire himself speaking. D'Alembert writes in the same vein:

When I see this imbecile *Parlement*, more intolerant than the Capuchins, fighting others as ignorant, imbecile, and intolerant as themselves, I am tempted to say as Timon the Misanthrope did to Alcibiades: "How pleased I am to see you at the head of affairs, young hothead! You will deal with these rascally Athenians for me." It may be that philosophy is about to be avenged against the Jesuits, *but who will avenge her against the Omers and their party?* Dare we flatter ourselves that the destruction of the Jesuit *canaille* will bring in its train the abolition of the *canaille* of Jansenism and intolerance?

And none of this fury on the part of the Jansenists was to be of any use to the *philosophes*. It is well known that Voltaire and his friends were far too wise to confuse Jansenism with freedom of thought. They were rewarded for being on their guard. Voltaire, who had followed the stages of the struggle between the Port Royal party and Le Tellier's, cries: "Jesuits and Jansenists join forces against *L'Esprit des Lois*. . . . Yet we dare, seeing this, to mock at the Lapps, the Samoëds and the Negroes—to repeat once more what we have so often said." The partisans of Loyola and of Jansen were, in fact, one as good as the other. The *philosophes* believed, and rightly, that these fanatics would be terrible when the day came for them to unite against philosophy; they foresaw too that the Jansenist *Parlementaires*, forced to assert their own orthodoxy after crushing the Jesuits, would find an outlet for their redoubled zeal in fresh persecutions. The decree against the Jesuits was issued on 6th August 1762. Four months earlier (10th March) Jean Calas had been broken on the wheel, strangled and thrown to the flames in accordance with the abominable sentence passed by the Toulouse *Parlement*; two years later it was to be Servan's turn; two years later again (in 1766) the magistrates of Abbeville condemned young de la Barre to have his hand cut off and his tongue pulled out and then to be beheaded, after which the body was to be burned. To ensure that the intention of this execution should be clear to all, the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* and other impious works were burned on the same pile with the victim, to bring home the suggestion that these were responsible for the young man's crime. This crime (I mean, of course, the magistrates' crime) must be laid at the feet of the magistrature in general. The provincial *Parlement* were conjointly responsible with the Abbeville judges and applauded their decision. Paris examined the case, pronounced it in order, and confirmed the sentence. The forecast of the *philosophes* was justified. I shall not detail the list of books that had the honour of being burned. The important thing for us is to understand why, at the moment when they were destroying the Jesuits, the *Parlements* were unable to enlist the full sympathy of the *philosophes*. Voltaire must have felt some satisfaction in recalling

his prophecy that they might well come to regret the expulsion of the Jesuits. D'Alembert, writing to him on 25th September, says:

Do you know what they were telling me about you yesterday? That you were beginning to feel sorry for the Jesuits and would almost feel tempted to write on their side if it were possible to create interest in the very people you had made ridiculous. I tell you there must be no human weakness. Leave the Jansenist and *Parlement canaille* to rid us peacefully of the Jesuit *canaille*; do nothing to stop these spiders from devouring each other.

For a reply we must go to Voltaire's letter to la Chalotais, 3rd November 1762:

Reason is making great progress with us, but we must beware lest Jansenism do as much harm one of these days as the Jesuits have done. I might rejoice more at being delivered from the foxes if I could see who would deliver me from the wolves.

And was not d'Alembert the first to exclaim, some months previously:

Jesuits, *Parlementaires*, Jansenists, Calvinist preachers:—all out-and-out *canaille* these, and wicked and dangerous too. At last, on the 6th of next month, we are to be delivered of the Jesuit *canaille* by the *Parlement canaille*; *but will Reason be any the better for it?* and *L'Inf****[1] any the worse?

Reason was no better off and he soon realised the fact. "The Jansenist *canaille* is becoming insolent since its victories, great or small, over the Jesuits." He writes to Voltaire:

If you want to know my scale—I rate a *Philosophe* higher than a King, a King higher than a Minister, a Minister than a Commissioner, a Commissioner than a Judge, a Judge than a Jesuit, and a Jesuit than a Jansenist.

Thus Voltaire, d'Alembert and the Encyclopædists all reckoned by the same measure.

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IT was necessary to dwell on these points before starting to examine the reproaches addressed to Voltaire and his friends

[1] An abbreviation of *L'Infâme*, the expression so constantly used by Voltaire in his works and correspondence. It is often supposed that he meant it to stand for "Christ." In fact it seems to have been his name for the whole system of bigotry and persecution against which he fought. (See *Ency. Brit.*, 11th edition, "Voltaire.")

on the subject of their conduct after Maupeou's *coup d'état*—or "*coup de filet*"[1]—of 20th January 1771. Voltaire had no longer any illusions as to the regeneration of the *Parlements*. He had, it is true, indulged in the inspiring vision of a new magistrature swept from end to end by the tide of new ideas, and ameliorating the Code in the name of tolerance and philanthropy. At the end of a letter to the Duc de Choiseul (12th November 1768) he writes:

N.B.—There has been a great revolution in men's minds. This is what a really wise man (Abbé Audra) writes to me from Toulouse: "Three-quarters of the *Parlement* have had their eyes opened and are groaning over Calas' sentence. It is only the old, case-hardened members who stand out against tolerance." I assure you, it will soon be the same in the *Parlement* of Paris.

And, a few months later, he cries in triumph:

At last a light has dawned upon some of the younger judges at Toulouse and they have sworn to make honourable amends. You pedants and fanatics, you wretched "*convulsionnaires*,"[2] monkeys turned tigers, assassins of Chevalier de la Barre, you shall learn what philosophy means!

Victorious Philosophy! You have overthrown the most stubborn prejudices, those of the *Parlement*.

The Abbé Audra (relative and friend of Abbé Morellet and, like him, a doctor of the Sorbonne), who is professor of history at Toulouse, teaches my *Histoire Générale* openly. What is more, he has had it printed by licence for the use of students. A priest who burnt a copy on his doorstep was brought before the *premier président* by two ushers and threatened with imprisonment before the whole assembly. Nearly all the members crowd into Abbé Audra's lectures.

Diderot, though less enthusiastic, cherishes the same dream. After speaking of the liberal ideas of Dupaty, advocate-general of the Bordeaux *Parlement*, and of the courage he had displayed in humiliating the commandant of his province—none other than the Duc de Richelieu—the independence which he manifested in fighting the bishops who had annulled Protestant marriages, and the forty rehabilitations that he had obtained,

[1] "Cast of the net."

[2] "*Convulsionnaires*" was a term applied to a certain section of hysterical religious fanatics.

Diderot exclaims: "What a joy if we live to see these old heads filled with the spirit of philosophy and patriotism! It is by no means impossible." But he had to take it back. The Dupatys were too few in number to bring about the expected revolution, whatever Voltaire may have thought. Grimm had insisted to his friends that this was so; when the Encyclopædists were joyfully welcoming Servan, the young magistrate-*philosophe*, into their ranks, he wrote as follows:

A young magistrate, who is dying of consumption in the heart of a province, cannot speak with enough weight to make the least impression on strong minds; if he does not look out, and if his passion for philosophy should transpire, he will get into trouble with his associates, for—thank God!—the magistrature is no less strongly opposed to the progress of Reason in France than the clergy, which gives us a very hopeful outlook. . . . What we want is enlightened, upright statesmen in the place of these old Jansenist and young *philosophe* magistrates.

But to return to Maupeou—he was certainly brazen enough, but one hardly knows whether to call him reckless or cunning. This man, who has been so harshly judged, knew very well how to collect votes for his reform, perhaps even how to get himself pardoned for carrying it by violence. He denounced the ancient *Parlements* to the public as standing obstinately in the way of all desirable ameliorations; he showed the immediate consequences of the suppression of privileges to be free justice and the admissibility of all citizens to the judicial functions; he replaced the inordinately large circuit of the Paris *Parlement* by more restricted circuits, to the very great benefit of the public; and finally, he promulgated edicts which had the accent of the *philosophe* and a tone reminiscent of the Encyclopædists. For all this Voltaire could have nothing but praise, and he proceeded to expound to the people, in a long series of witty and ingenious pamphlets and publications, their grounds for rejoicing in the overthrow of the old *Parlements* and the advent of the new.

"There were undoubtedly great possibilities in the idea," says Monsieur de Carnet in summarizing the broad lines of outline of Maupeou's scheme, "and if it could have been carried through the tentative projects of 1774-87 might

have been successful instead of being checked by the restoration of the *Parlements*."

And M. de Flammermont says: "The creation of the Superior Councils should have been a popular move. It brought judges and judged nearer together, cutting out the long journeys which had hitherto been necessary, and all the business which had deluged the Paris *Parlement* would have been quickly dealt with in the seven courts' separate tribunals. Wherever these Councils were established, provinces and towns reaped substantial benefit."

That Voltaire might have some reason to approve of the reforms we can, therefore, understand; though to us Maupeou's attempt to reform justice seems analogous to Turgot's in the administration. They were each seeking a clear basis for their respective departments, and looking back we can see how they both tried to reconcile the monarchic system with philosophical ideas. It is all the more astonishing to find a critic so favourable to the eighteenth century as Villemain sharply reproaching Voltaire for having "extolled the arbitrary act of a despotic minister and of a courtesan." M. Soury, too, after drawing up an eloquent and, to our mind, too enthusiastic *précis* of the history of the eighteenth-century *Parlement*, adds: "It is a pity that Voltaire should have been so carried away by spitefulness, misplaced zeal, and strange courtier-like propensities as to perpetrate an evil deed in vindicating Maupeou's *coup d'état* and—still worse—perpetrate an evil book—viz. *L'Histoire du Parlement de Paris*." This, however, is an extreme and unjust view. But granting that Voltaire's conduct may be open to criticism in some of these respects, we must also take into account his joy on seeing certain of the reforms he had advocated put into effect—notably the disappearance of the sale of offices, the abuse of which he had so often denounced.

We can well imagine the value of Voltaire's support to Maupeou at this juncture. . . . He was invaluable as an ally. He plunged both hands into his sack of malicious witticisms, and the result was a pelting shower of puns and quibbles. He had already made a point of saying with mock seriousness: "After you, *Monsieur le Président*!" when he met a donkey at his garden gate, and he had often, when with d'Alembert, jeered at "this respectable tribunal which would hardly go out of its way to see that the people had bread, provided that

they had the Sacraments." Beuchot's edition of Voltaire's works includes (in vol. xlvi.) a number of documents relating to the suppression of the *Parlements*, but it is in his letters above all that we see him going back persistently and unwearyingly to this matter which he had so much at heart. . . .

To do him justice, too, we must admit that it required some resolution to rush into the fray. The Duc de Choiseul and the *Parlements* had been struck by the same hand; as we said before, many people saw in the two measures a double Jesuit revenge. Did not Voltaire then risk alienating Choiseul, losing the support of the *Parlements* and of the most popular man in France? From the start our *philosophe* defines his position with a clearness and frankness that admit of no misinterpretation: "Whatever happens, I am a Choiseulist and not a *Parlementaire*." He sends a spirited reply to Madame du Deffand:

I do not feel that I am failing them [the Choiseuls] in the least by my detestation of those preposterous, bloodthirsty pedants. I abhorred—as did all Europe—the assassins of Chevalier de la Barre, of Calas, of Servan, of Comte de Lally. . . .

As you probably know, I was no friend of theirs. I am faithful to all my passions. You hate *philosophes*, I hate bourgeois tyrants. I have always forgiven you your fury against philosophy; do you forgive me mine against the *cohue des enquêtes*.[1]

His declaration to Richelieu is equally emphatic:

"The recluse has but obeyed the dictates of his heart. He is inwardly convinced that the ancient Paris *Parlement* was as much in the wrong as at the time of the *Fronde*; he cannot in any case love the murderers of Calas, of poor Lally, or of Chevalier de la Barre."

In a letter to Comte de Rochefort he combines praise of Maupeou's constructive policy with violent criticism of those whom he had destroyed:

I continue to loathe Chevalier de la Barre's assassins and I have respect for the King's government. Nothing can be finer than the free administration of justice throughout the kingdom and the suppression of venality. Both of these achievements are admirable and it distresses me to see that this is not recognised.

No one can say that he does not state his opinions squarely. It would be easy to fall into the error of putting it all down to

[1] That is, against the people who instigated the holding of *enquêtes*.

" courtier-like propensities," but I do not quite see what the Patriarch of Ferney stood to lose in offending Maupeou, though it is quite clear what it might mean to him if he went against public opinion. He chose however not to follow, but to rally it; not succeeding, he became angry:

> I am infinitely obliged to Madame d'Argental for sending Madame Corbi her imprecations against the gowned cannibals who have so often shed innocent blood and whom the people are fools enough to regret (*Les Peuples au Parlement*). It is like our nation of apes to look upon our assassins as protectors.

But we must not exaggerate the intensity of the people's protest against the *coup d'état*, as it has too long been the fashion to do. " This time," says Villemain, " France does not stand by Voltaire." Barni quotes Henri Martin as saying: " For the first time public opinion was not with Voltaire but with Mably. Contempt for the Ministry was too strong for its reforms to be appreciated." We have seen that in the provinces the Superior Councils were composed either entirely of members of the ancient *Parlements* or had taken in some of them to complete their numbers—which does not look much like a revolution! It is claimed indeed that, if the list of judges had not become shorter through the reform, by far the greater number of the former magistrates would have demanded seats on Maupeou's tribunals. In some of the towns where tribunals were completely reconstituted there seems to have been no disturbance at all. At Lyons, Aix, Rennes, the Superior Councils were installed amidst cheers; at Besançon the people went further and insulted the old *Parlementaires*. " Nowhere," concludes Monsieur Carré, " did one see any popular protest against Maupeou's revolution." To all unprejudiced minds in fact it was clear that Maupeou had succeeded beyond anything he could have expected, beyond even his own expectations. The nation was disconcerted at first; then, recovering itself, came to the conclusion that it was as well off in the present as in the past. Partisans of the *Parlementaires* do not deny that the people were indifferent with regard to the " Fathers of the Country "; they explain the fact by pointing out that life at that period was full of distractions, whether in

the nature of pleasures and gaiety or of political and economic proposals, which, appearing daily in print, aroused intense interest and turned all eyes on the future. But why not assume simply that the public, shocked by the religious intolerance of the old assemblies, their egoism and their ridiculous opposition to all reforms of no matter what description, were past regretting "that pothouse of the King's guardians" where "Maître Joly de Fleury bawled his absurdities in full session" and his colleagues uttered their "inanities." "You will admit," writes Voltaire, "that it is pleasing to see the *Parlement* issuing a decree against smallpox"; and later, after this decree of 8th June 1763, he writes the famous pages in which he burlesques these erudite and pretentious "asses":

> And so, Gentlemen, you who are the best doctors and the best theologians in Europe, have had to pronounce judgment on smallpox just as you have done on Aristotle's *Categories*, the circulation of the blood, emetics, or quinine. We all know that you are, in virtue of your class, authorities on these matters as well as on finance.

All this must be taken into account in considering the indifference of the people to the fallen magistrates. We must not go by what Hardy, a *Parlementaire* and Jansenist, says; rather we must not suppose that all France was moved as Paris was moved, nor even that Paris was profoundly moved. The proof lies in the fact that the *Parlement* ceased to exist after the *coup d'état*; it cannot therefore have been very deeply rooted. When it came back it was to find itself stranded and ill at ease. Uniting with the clergy in a last attempt to defend their common privileges, and preoccupied with this one idea, it allowed Louis XVI. to abolish the rights of servitude and mortmain in his domains without raising a finger to release the whole of the nation from ancient bondage. Dismissed by Louis XVI. the *Parlement* still maintained a dignified front, but there was no more life in it. The magistrates knew that they would now never attain the position they had sought to hold as d'Argenson's "representative assembly of the whole nation," neither would they be a smaller States General; to achieve that end they would have had to adapt themselves to their century, to absorb

more of that "philosophy" whose books they had burned. Like the clergy and the "nobility of the sword," the "nobility of the *Robe*" in its turn clamoured for the convocation of the States General. Maupeou's stroke had in fact been justified; he had no more use for the *Parlement*, the *Parlement* had no more use for itself.

Are we right, either, in blaming Voltaire as "the only member of his party" to uphold the Government against the magistrates? Monsieur Flammermont evidently thinks so, though in a book of such distinction as his we may be permitted to regard this point of detail as an oversight. I am aware that certain of the *philosophes* were inclined to wonder whether the authority of the Crown, freed from interference by the removal of the *Parlement*, might not manifest itself in worse tyranny than before; but there is evidence to show that no real agreement had been reached as to the barriers it would be expedient to oppose to the Sovereign's omnipotence and that the *philosophes* were by no means disposed to follow Montesquieu. In any case, how can we say that Voltaire acted without the assent of the "brethren," that he was abandoned not only by the nation but by the *philosophes*? Rousseau is, of course, often refused a place among the Encyclopædists; but what would have been his opinion of the magistrates who had condemned *Émile*, for this reason—among others—"that men brought up on such maxims would be prepossessed with ideas of tolerance"? And d'Alembert, was he the one to feel regret for the *Parlements*? Did he not say to Frederick:

> Philosophy in France may quite well suffer this wretched fate (of being delivered to the executioner and the stake) if, as is threatened, the Jesuits are recalled. The *Parlement* which expelled them has now itself been expelled. It was hardly any more tolerant or more favourable to philosophy than they were.

And again, in 1766, he says to the King of Prussia:

> These *Parlements*, far from deserving the favourable opinion conceived of them by foreigners, are if possible even more brutalized than the clergy by the spirit of intolerance and persecution which dominates them. It is neither the magistrates, nor even the citizens, but these senseless fanatics of Jansenists who would crush us if they could, under the despotism of theological absurdities and the night of ignorance which superstition and ignorance have established.

Later, when the magistrates returned to office, d'Alembert was very speedily moved to regret "Maupeou's *cuisine*"; if it had been a "stinking beast," the other *Parlement* was a "venomous beast" which returned to its old bad ways as soon as it was re-established.

These two bodies [the priests and the *Parlements*] who, in the late King's reign, waged perpetual war over "*billets de confession*," or some Bull or other dating from the end of Louis XIV.'s reign, seem now to have formed a league of offence and defence against philosophy and the progress of reason. These *Parlements*, which burn *philosophes*' works so ruthlessly, may well take to boiling the *philosophes* themselves if we let them.

We see then how anxious the *philosophes* were to "unmask this senate of Midas in the eyes of Europe, duped into thinking of its members as statesmen, republicans, *philosophes*, or fathers of the country, whereas they were nothing but flat Jansenists and pompous fools." Morelli writes to Lord Shelburne in 1776:

It is only too true that these fathers of the people, these defenders of the nation, are actually its enemies; only too true that, partly from blind prejudice, partly from vile interest, they place and will continue to place perpetual obstacles in the way of all the good one would do. O, my lord, I beg you to spread this sad truth among your countrymen—that our *Parlements* are, like yours, the people's real enemies.

Marmontel judges them no less severely. He writes in his *Mémoires*:

Lamoignon was known to be aiming at the simplification of legal procedure and the cutting down of delays and costs. In the eyes of his old associates this was looked upon as evidence of hostility on his part and he was accordingly feared and hated.

Not for one moment does he believe in the opposition of the *Parlementaires*:

The *Parlements* are supported in their opposition by a considerable party; the clergy, the nobility, and everybody of good repute made common cause with the higher magistrate. They are all victims of their own detestable avarice.

He did not take the magistrates' appeal to the nation seriously, neither was he anything but doubtful as to their sincerity in calling for the States General:

It was obvious the people's own tribunal was the most formidable of all that the privileged bodies and favoured classes could have to face. Burdened as they were with taxation, the people were not likely to grant exemption to others, and these bodies, having everything to fear from a discussion of their privileges, would hardly choose to submit the matter to a popular assembly.

Marmontel's distrust of the *Parlements* like that of the *philosophes* was unconquerable. Diderot's was if possible more wholehearted, and he expresses himself with violence. An extract from his judgment on *L'Histoire du Parlement de Paris* will, we believe, absolve us from producing further evidence in support of our conclusion that Voltaire was not alone in his party but had the support of its most enlightened members. "A more learned writer," declares Diderot, "would no doubt have treated this important subject more profoundly." He evidently thought Voltaire's treatment too tender; this is his idea of what might have been done with it:

We should have been shown this body accepting exile, refusing justice to the people and bringing about anarchy when their own imaginary rights were concerned—though never when it was the people's rights that were in question. We should have been shown its intolerance, bigotry and stupidity . . . its eagerness to have a finger in everything—religion, government, war, police, finance, arts and sciences, and its invariable ruin of everything by its ignorance, its private interests and prejudices. We should have been shown its insolence under a weak King, and its cowardice under a strong King; its backwardness which left it more out of touch with its century and the progress of reason than Carthusian monks in their cells. We should have been shown its selling of itself, the Court pensions enjoyed by the greater part of its members; its violent opposition to liberty of any kind, civil or religious; its servility to the great, its oppression of the small. . . . We should have been shown this body as the poorest, smallest, most formal, ignorant, obstinate, wicked, vile, and vindictive that could be imagined—as the irreconcilable enemy of philosophy and of reason.

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AS "irreconcilable enemies of philosophy and of reason" the *Parlementaires* were not likely to have the support of the *philosophes*. Voltaire calls them "little black-gowned scoundrels who are the oppressors of men of letters." Men of letters regarded them, indeed, with suspicion even when the magistrates were unwittingly working towards the same end as the Encyclopædists. In truth the *robins* opened the breach through which the army of philosophy was to pass; when they would

have blocked that army's passage it was too late, and they were carried along with the others. At the same time those who had watched them at work on the breach, with the certainty of profiting by their efforts, were by no means grateful to them for preparing the way. The *Parlementaires* had served the cause of tolerance when they supposed themselves to have been serving Jansenism, the cause of freedom of thought when they thought it the cause of religion. They were allies of the *philosophes*—but involuntary ones, ready to change into enemies at the least provocation. The *philosophes* owed them no gratitude; the assailants passed over the bodies of those who had been their guides without knowing it and now turned upon them seeing them close behind and prepared to go on to the end.

V

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE FINANCIERS

Here is an anecdote from Madame du Hausset's *Mémoires*. Quesnay was holding forth to his friends one day on the subject of money: "*la poudre de prelinpinpin*," the "Hey presto powder" of fairy tales. Taking a handful of *louis* from his pocket, he said: "Everything that exists is contained within these little pieces which will take you comfortably to the world's end. All men are obedient and assiduous servants to those who have this magic powder. Despise money, and you despise happiness, liberty and pleasures of every kind." He then repeated the popular eighteenth-century comparison between the empty honour of a nobleman's *cordon bleu* and the gold pieces which are useful everywhere in helping the unfortunate. Finally, by way of peroration, he cried: "Hurrah for the all-powerful *prelinpinpin* powder!" This was greeted with bursts of laughter, as the door opened to admit M. de Gontaut, Madame de Pompadour, and the King, who had all been listening to the doctor's remarks. Louis XV., who was in a good humour, repeated the words: "Hurrah for the *prelinpinpin* powder!" He then added ironically: "Could you get me some, Doctor?"

A serious question, indeed, and one that it was easier to turn aside with a jest than to answer. This is where the financiers come in; their influence grows in proportion to the resources at their disposal and the extent to which people need their services. When Marshal Saxe was negotiating the Dauphin's second marriage with the daughter of the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, he wrote to the latter:

"The Pâris have been extremely useful to me in this affair. These are two personages who wish to remain unidentified—they are really extremely important people in this country because they keep the whole machine in motion. They are my intimate and constant friends, the most honest of men and the best of citizens—and there are few Frenchmen of whom that can be said."

Monsieur P. de Nolhac, in quoting this letter, comments: "This eulogy . . . coming from a man with the Marshal's exceptional opportunities of judging men accurately, shows not only that the financiers were better than their reputation but that they already held the secret resources of the State in their hands." This explains the change which came over their relations with men of letters and also the importance of these very relations in the development of philosophical ideas. The Pâris are friends of Voltaire: let us see how the financiers were able to support the Encyclopædists.

It has been said, and rightly, that financiers date from the eighteenth century. Up till then, "contractors" (or "partisans") and "extortioners" were all one heard of. In the first few years of the century contractors were lackeys or sons of lackeys, who "took up the business when they were reduced to starvation," as Usbek writes to Ibben.[1] Clearly, at that stage, an alliance with the financiers would have been anything but a recommendation. Any "esteem" one might have for them would not be of such an order as to make friendship admissible. But since 1721 things have changed—as we realise from the list, published at the end of the first volume of *La Vie Privée de Louis XV.*, of the *Origines, noms, qualités, etc., des fermiers-généraux.*[2] (The author of this book was by no means favourable to the financiers.) Among these *fermiers-généraux* of the eighteenth century, one does of course meet with former lackeys such as Chambon, Dangé, Gaillard de la Bouexière, and Texier, and with the sons of lackeys such as Bouret and de Delay de la Garde. Bragouse came from Montpellier with nothing but a case of razors as his equipment; Haudry was the son of a baker; Perinet, of a wine merchant; the names Girard, Fillon de Villemur, Remi de Jully belong to those who climbed to the highest summits of finance from the humblest of occupations. All the others were of a much higher standing. To a very large extent they were the sons of financiers, *fermiers-généraux*, *sous-fermiers*, receivers or directors;

[1] In Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*.

[2] Men who in return for certain specific payments made by them to the Treasury acquired the right to levy various taxes.

to this category belonged Adine, Bergeret, de la Haye, de Jean, de la Porte (the elder), de la Porte de Sérancourt, de Rossy, Dupleix de Bacquencourt, Dupin, Durey d'Arnoncourt, Fontaine, Grimod de la Reynière and Grimod Dufort, de la Live d'Epinay, L'Allemant de Betz, L'Allemant de Nantouillet, Lantage de Félicourt, Le Riche de la Poupelinière, Le Normant d'Étoile, Le Normant de Tournehem and Olivier de Montluçon. Others again belonged to the best bourgeois circles: Brissard senior was provost of Meulan, Camuset was a notary, Darlus came of good commercial stock; de Beaumont, de Guizy, de la Borde and de Salins were of very good family; Desvieux was the son of a barrister to the Council, Helvétius of the Queen's principal physician, Le Monnier of a large cloth manufacturer; Roussel and Savalette were sons of notaries, Rolland de Souferrière of a captain of *carabiniers*—and so on. We then come to more resplendent and distinguished names: Caze, married to a Demoiselle de Saint-Cyr; Chevalier de Montigny, a nephew of Colbert's collaborator; de Beaufort, an official of high standing in the previous reign; Duché of the Montpellier "legal nobility"; du Clusel de la Chaussée, Durand de Mézy, Étienne d'Augny (of an old *parlementaire* family of Metz), Héron de Ville-Fosse, Le Mercier, of the genuine Parisian bourgeoisie.

In Le Grand's *L'Usurier Gentilhomme*, which was played in 1713, Manouville, a boor who has become rich, wishes to make a match which will enable him to extricate himself from an awkward situation when the law shall take upon itself to verify the financiers' accounts. At the time of which we write, the best *partis* were reserved for the daughters of the financiers, but in these cases there was not by any means always a *mésalliance*, whatever the chroniclers may say. The Marquis of Thiard, of the *Académie Française*, did, it is true, marry the daughter of Brissard—"a brutal, insolent fellow and not a good business man," whose son's name was struck off the list of the "Sixty"[1] on account of his "insolent luxuriousness" by de l'Averdy. But when Joly de Fleury, advocate-general to the *Parlement*,

[1] The sixty *fermiers-généraux* of the Revenue, nominated in the contract of 1774.

asked for the hand of Mademoiselle Desvieux, he was not marrying beneath him; the lady was a granddaughter of a barrister to the Council and her brother-in-law was president of the *Requêtes du Parlement*. Neither had anyone need to be ashamed of entering the de Delay de la Garde family whose founder had been a doorkeeper to Cardinal de Bonzi, but " had many virtues which made him regretted and was very pious and charitable "; his eldest son, who obtained the reversion of his office, married Mademoiselle de Ligneville (of the Lorraine family of Ligneville), while his other son, a judge in the *Grand Conseil*, master of the *Requêtes* and Commander of the Order of Saint-Lazare, married Mademoiselle de Fénelon, daughter of the Marquis and former ambassador to Holland, whose younger daughter married Helvétius. Monsieur de Malesherbes, son of the president of Lamoignon and himself afterwards Chancellor of France, took for his wife Mademoiselle Grimod de la Reynière.

These examples will serve to show clearly the difference between the men of finance in the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries; the lackeys, sons of lackeys, or those with the souls of lackeys, had become the exceptions. We do not propose to vindicate them; as we shall see, there are several among them who deserve the insulting satires to which they have been subjected. What we wish to show is that finance in the eighteenth century constituted a new world from the outset, a class of society better born and better connected than the old class of extortioners and contractors. We should certainly place it at the head of the bourgeoisie if we had to fix the grades from the point of view of the social hierarchy; from the point of view of political influence we should place it still higher and unhesitatingly give it the advantage over the nobility of the *Robe* and even over the nobility of birth.

Another sign of the times—and one which enabled the *philosophes* to intervene in the financiers' favour when time-honoured prejudice was against them, and to repay them for their services—was the use of the term " probity " in speaking of men of the financial world. This new way of regarding them dated from early in the century. " Not long ago," writes

Voltaire, in 1749, "we had among us a man of finance who had more than once aided the State out of his own resources and, at his death, left ten millions of money in loans to private persons, five millions of which were lent without interest." This man was no other than Samuel Bernard, who, it will be remembered, desired to negotiate with "*le Roi Soleil*" as with an equal; it seemed to him that if anyone—were it Louis XIV. himself—wanted another man's purse, pride would have to go by the board. When Samuel died many of his benevolent and generous deeds were recalled. He had mastered the art of doing business in the grand manner. In Hénault's *Mémoires* we read: "It should be added that Bernard was generous, whatever may have been his motive. He rendered great services; in the army, above all, he helped to bring about successes and prevented big failures." His daughter was married to Molé, afterwards First President, and his two sons became —the one, president of the *Parlement*, the other, master of the *Requêtes*. He seems indeed to have been an honest man, despite the attacks of the chroniclers. In the eighteenth century the *fermiers-généraux* had the reputation in the main of being decent people. Even among financiers of the lowest extraction there were some who were respected for their uprightness: Girard, for instance, "a strong man, but gentle and very simple"; Haudry, "the hardest worker of the 'farms'"; Périnet, "one of the best men in the world"; Remi de Jully, "the straightest, most level-headed man in society." In the *Liste des Fermiers-Généraux depuis* 1720, *etc.*, we read again: "This Bergeret is a good worker, rather serious, easy to live with, extremely steady, perfectly honest and not at all proud." Darlus was "a very decent fellow, most gentle, polished, and charitable. . . ." De Beaufort was "a man who carried through several affairs with great skill, a very good sort, but thrifty." De la Borde is described as "a very good fellow"; de la Gombaude as "a very good fellow, a good worker and very charitable"; Duché as "an exceedingly good fellow"; de Salins as "a good fellow, reasonably charitable, and respected by his colleagues." Joly is "physically ugly but morally beautiful, extremely generous and lavish in all he does";

Le Mercier "is the most simple and generous of men, a father to his clerks," etc., etc. Rolland d'Aubreuil dies poor, "having rendered great services without getting his money back." Baroness Oberkirch closes her *Mémoires* with a somewhat flattering portrait of Beaujon: "For the rest, an excellent man, doing untold good and spending his fortune in charitable deeds"; and, after bantering Monsieur de la Reynière, she adds: "he is a patron of the arts, not in the capacity of an enlightened connoisseur, perhaps, but as a kind-hearted man who wishes to be useful and to solace the suffering."

The financiers gave their services to individuals, but still more to the State, and it must be admitted that their interest is on a par with their patriotism. "Since the collapse of the System, the *Fermes générales* have administered the revenue. The indirect taxes were farmed out in October to a band of selected contractors who pledged themselves to pay the King an annual sum of 55,000,000 in rent. These taxes are now estimated to bring in over 100,000,000." The difference is worthy of attention, and the author adds in a footnote: "Since this time the *fermiers-généraux* have become firmly established; they are now recognised personages in the kingdom and have come to be looked upon as pillars of the State." "Pillars of the State" was the phrase of Cardinal Fleury, on presenting the contractors to King Louis XV. The witticism ascribed to Marshal Souvré: "Yes, Sire, they hold up the State as the hangman's cord holds up the victim!" does them an injustice, for in certain circumstances at least the financiers merited Cardinal Fleury's description. As an instance of their generosity, take the following. In 1740, a year of scarcity, there was a rising against the extortions which were ruining Normandy; one of the *fermiers-généraux* sent at his own expense enough corn to supply a whole province. As an example of their disinterestedness, take this. In 1743, Orry, the controller-general, demanded that the duty on the linen and hosiery sent out of the kingdom should be remitted to encourage exports; the *fermiers* accepted this ruling and refused to take any indemnity. As to their patriotism, did they not raise a loan at five per cent. for Louis XV., when he needed it for the war

with Germany, and take from him only the same interest they themselves had to pay—*i.e.* five per cent.? The Pâris were helpful and human. Helvétius, a *fermier-général*, who married the portionless daughter of the Marquis de Ligneville, refused money obtained by confiscations, and indemnified those who had to suffer by the malpractices of his clerks.

It cannot be pretended that all were of this calibre. Dangé, the one-time lackey, was "miserly, insolent, and foppish"; de Saint-Valéry must have been the particular financier whom Gresset had in mind when he wrote: "These men have grown old in folly"; Dupleix, brother of the Governor of Pondichéry, was "a tall man, a low fellow, surly, very hard, and quite incapable of doing anything useful"; Thoinard would have been the biggest miser in the world had not his wife been there to dispute the title with him. We might prolong this list, but it would be easier by far to prolong the preceding one. Besides La Poupelinière, whom Marmontel so often praises, how many other financiers there are whose reputation for probity and generosity have been handed down to us! There is George Sand's portrait of Dupin de Franceuil, her grandfather; lastly, there is the kindly, lavishly generous Billard du Monceau, who came to the rescue of Anne Bécu, when her natural daughter, Jeanne, was born, and made himself responsible for the education of the child who was destined to succeed Madame de Pompadour. "There are some very fine characters among those whom one might imagine to be actuated by self-interest only."

The change in the reputation of the financiers was mirrored in literature. The same public which applauded *L'Usurier Gentilhomme* applauded *L'Arlequin Traitant*,[1] in 1716, when the author lays the scene in Hell and calls up the great criminals of finance to expiate their abominable crimes. But in the middle of the eighteenth century, financiers were introduced into plays without figuring as scoundrels. *The Financier*, a comedy by Saint-Foix, which appeared in August 1761, shows us a financier—Alcimon, the hero of the drama—inflicting punishment on the noble though rascally Marquis, and recompensing

[1] *Traitant* = farmer of the revenue.

the Chevalier by the gift of his sister in marriage and the half of his own fortune. The *fermiers-généraux* could go to see comedies of this sort without fear. " M. de Saint-Foix's financier," wrote the *Mercure de France*, " is in no sense like the type delineated in *Turcaret*, and for this reason—that *Turcaret no longer resembles even the worst specimens of his class.*" It was no longer necessary for the money traders to pay Le Sage 100,000 *livres* to withdraw his piece; the majority of them did not even suspect that it was aimed at them at all. Saint-Foix's hero is a very different person from the lackey turned contractor, as rich as he is foolish, as foolish as he is knavish; we are shown a man of intelligence who spends his money freely and, as the *Mercure* put it, " whose heart was less corrupt than his mind, as is the case with most people; he had but little pity for the unfortunate, but that is a vice to some extent typical of his class, and one which is only too commonly acquired with opulence." Many of the financiers who went to see the play were both very opulent and sufficiently politic—or even simply human enough—to give proof every day of their ability to serve their own interests and yet indicate their " pity for the unfortunate."

Fréron, too, in an article in which he abuses the financiers (apropos of M. de Coulanges' *Poésies variées*), is careful to add a note of amendment to distinguish between the seventeenth-century " *partisans* " and their eighteenth-century successors. " The scene," he says, " has so completely changed that the latter are just as deserving of respect and praise in virtue of their upright conduct and their lofty sentiments and noble attitude as the former were deserving of decent men's contempt and censure." We even find formal attempts to justify the farm system as opposed to the administration, in which it is demonstrated that " the personal influence of the *fermier*, by becoming identified with the interests of his district, prevents all the vices of a steward's administration."

The author of *L'Essai sur les Principes des Finances* (1769) recognises that precautions are necessary " to prevent benefices from ever exceeding a reasonable proportion." His proposed remedy was one which would have exasperated Montesquieu,

for he asks that the highest honours and dignities should be open to financiers, insisting that, " satisfied with an honest benefice, their principal aims would lie in the direction of consideration." This idea bears the stamp of the eighteenth century. La Bruyère would have been completely taken aback by it. Philosophy had no doubt done a great deal to dissipate the prejudice against the financiers, but they themselves had also done their part to show that they no longer deserved the contempt that had formerly been their portion.

Yet another prejudice which the century of philosophy was bound to oppose (a prejudice which is found also at the beginning of the Regency) was the contention that, though one must be a knave to make a fortune, one certainly need not be intelligent; on the contrary, it was even held that stupidity conduced to success. Chance was held to be the sole factor in success —and chance favours the helpless. Turcaret himself voices this theory: " You can make your way without having a fine intelligence," he asserts, adding inanely: " Outside myself and one or two others, we are a thoroughly commonplace lot; all that is necessary is a certain amount of practice, a routine that one can hardly fail to pick up." Turcaret would no doubt have burst out laughing at the mention of a science of finance. Rica asks Ibben in amazement whether it would not be simpler to treat the State budget as if it were that of an individual, and proceeds to make fun of the so-called systems which were complicated and useless:

" In the course of three years I have seen four changes in the financial system. . . . In Turkey and in Persia tribute is levied to-day in the same manner as at the time when those empires were founded; it would be as well if it were here the same. Certainly we do not go about it as intelligently as the Occidentals; we think that there is no more difference between the administration of a prince's revenues and the property of an individual than there is between computing a hundred thousand *tomans* and one hundred. But there is more *finesse* and mystery here."

Montesquieu was to treat the question seriously in *L'Esprit des Lois* later on; he said, very rightly:

" As for us, it is impossible that our financial system should ever be in order, for we always know that we are going to do something, but never what that something will be. A great minister has come to mean for us no longer the wisest dispenser of the public revenues but the man of ingenuity who is able to find what are called expedients."

It was recognised, therefore, by Montesquieu that there was a science of finance, since it required " ingenuity "—that is to say, real skill—to rectify the financial system of the eighteenth century, with its entire absence of method or regularity. If we glance through the chapter entitled, " Government and Administration," in Monsieur Carré's *La France sous Louis XV.*, we shall realise the difficulty he must have experienced in fulfilling his task amid such a tangle of intricacies. " It occurred to no one," he says, " to note the extent to which the *fermiers-généraux* were actuated by science and even by the true political instinct. Fouquier-Tinville might be able to decapitate this great corps but he could not put it out of countenance." " No one " is perhaps too strong an expression; the historian is thinking of the courtiers who were behind their times. In the *Liste des Fermiers-Généraux* we come across such phrases as these at every step: " Beaufort was a clever man . . . de la Borde is one of the most skilful financiers in the company, particularly in commercial dealings . . . de Guizy had his own capacity to thank for his place . . . de la Haye is one of the cleverest men in the aids party . . . de la Porte du Plessis was one of the most skilled financiers in the five great divisions . . . de Salins was a walking library of the settlements made from the establishment of the corps until his own time . . . Durand de Mézy was the cleverest and best-known man at his work . . . Mazade was an extremely clever man "; similarly, we meet with a constant repetition of such epithets as: " a good worker," " a great worker," " a very great worker," " the best possible worker." Side by side with these we get more than one *fermier-général* who knows nothing about his job—or does his best not to know anything. De la Garde " is not up to his job "; de Jean " prefers pleasure to work "; de Saint-Valéry was " neither

a great worker nor good at detail in the districts"; du Clusel de la Chaussée has no aptitude, Durey d'Arnoncourt is taken up exclusively with his mistresses, L'Allemand de Nantouillet "easily gets muddled in business and knows practically nothing about it," and Olivier de Montluçon has all his work done for him by a secretary. But amateur financiers are definitely in the minority, and one sees plainly that the successful ones did not succeed only through being dissolute and unintelligent.

This we see also from writings relating to finance, which in their time were attentively read. Fréron had to give an account of a work by the famous d'Éon de Beaumont, who from the age of twenty-five had published books on finance and politics:

"Finance," he writes, "has long been a State secret with us. Pillage and extortion had covered it with the veil of mystery. It would be a gross injustice to confuse these worthless extortioners with those who have succeeded to their functions without succeeding to their ignominy. Decency and urbanity have taken the place of coarseness and barbarity, and finance is worthy to-day of the honour formerly acceded to it by the Romans. It no longer fears the light of day, and its most secret operations have furnished a subject for profound study, so that we already have several good books on this important matter. In this category, Monsieur, you must place *Les Mémoires pour Servir a l'Histoire Générale des Finances* by M. Déon de Beaumont (1758). . . ."

Generally speaking, then, the financiers as a class received justice from all reasonable and unprejudiced people. Here again philosophy had been a powerful auxiliary in drawing the attention of the public to economic problems and the financiers; writers made readers understand that here was a new science, still in its infancy, but perhaps the most important of all, and one which demanded those qualities most rarely found in a citizen. After 1730 especially, when Melon published his *Essai sur le Commerce*, men of letters were preoccupied with administrative affairs. Abbé Morellet writes in 1764: "Some years ago a Minister in office calculated the number of memoranda addressed to him annually at 1200." These

were concerned with agriculture, population, industry and commerce, navigation and customs, with the science of finance in fact, viewed not as the "science of resources" but as "economic science," in the words of Mirabeau. In the works of Duclos we are shown at every turn how these questions formed the preoccupation of the *philosophes* and were the subject of their writings and conversations. In the preface of his *Mémoires Secrets* he asserts: "The item of finance is perhaps the one point in history that it is most important to clear up so that we may discover its real principles." In the case of the military art, "the most esteemed of our general officers maintain that all the assistance needed for all the theory that can be formulated is to be found in a comparatively small number of printed memoranda."

It is not so in the case of the economic science of a State, the administration of its finance—that department of government which is more or less imperfect in all the different countries and has nowhere attained the pitch of perfection that we know—or at least feel—that it might attain. There is all the more reason for research which will define its principles and consign them to history, inasmuch as finance is, they say, the nerve centre of all civil and military operations —an axiom which is indisputable. . . . Up till now it would seem that we have had financiers, but no financial policy, in the State. . . .

For some years past philosophy has been giving its attention to this interesting subject; the veil was about to be pierced and those whom it shrouded were already in consternation, when the incident to which I am going to refer intervened to shut out the light. . . . Every Minister who either did not admit his own ignorance or feared to show it by asking for information, desired to keep the people in darkness and to have none but blind witnesses of his proceedings. Should he have any illumination which he could exploit in his own interest, he suspected others of having the same. Those who are condemned to work the treadmill should have their eyes covered.

But it was already too late. Morellet's fierce protest appeared with this proud epigraph, taken from Tacitus: "*Ingenia studiaque facilius oppresseris quam revocaris.*" Silence might be enforced upon those who turned the treadmill, but philosophy was to remove the bandage from their eyes.

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THE *philosophes* and the financiers were bound to meet in the *salons* of the period, for—as it is easy to see from the foregoing pages—the men of wealth now mixed far more in society

than before. The aristocracy of money had been transformed from the point of view of society. Its opulence no longer "hit one in the eye," as the Goncourts said; the sons of lackeys had, from mixing with men of the world, acquired the qualities of distinction, correct bearing and intelligence, which their fathers had been represented as so clumsily and so vainly seeking by the comedy-writers of the Regency. On 11th September 1754 the Italians gave a comedy called, *L'Esprit du Jour*. In the first scene the *Provincial* confides to his interlocutor, the *Complaisant*, that he has come to Paris relying on the protection of *L'Esprit du Jour*. "Excellent!" replies the *Complaisant*, "in that way you will be able to get a footing in the 'farms.'" The *Provincial*, who has just got out of the coach, and imagines himself to be still in the world of Turcaret's and Monsieur Rafle's time, shows plainly that he is not flattered by the prospect. The *Complaisant* then proceeds to rectify his superannuated views on the men of fortune:

Bouffi d'orgeuil et pétri d'arrogance,
Jadis un financier ne savait que compter.
Il ne compte pas moins aujourd'hui, mais il pense.
Il n'aurait dans le monde osé se présenter;
Avec lui maintenant on s'amuse, on s'allie;
Dans les cercles choisis, employant ses loisirs,
Il y répand les douceurs de la vie;
Et, bien loin de nuire aux plaisirs,
Sa présence les multiplie.[1]

Grimm also ridicules the portraits of financiers which appear in the *Lettres d'Osman* of the Chevalier d'Arcq (15th June 1753), and has every justification for so doing.

The gross and ridiculous figure of a financier which Osman paints for us is only one more of the copies of which we long ago grew tired; the original no longer exists here in Paris. This portrait may have borne some resemblance

[1] Puffed out with pride and chock-full of arrogance, of yore a financier knew only how to count his money. He does just as much counting now, but he does some thinking too. Formerly he would not have ventured to show himself in cultured society. Now people find him good company, an ally worth having. He now spends his leisure hours in good society and he enjoys the sweets of existence; far from showing himself an enemy to social enjoyments, he adds to their number.

to it fifty years ago, when Le Sage produced his comedy *Turcaret*. To-day, when our financiers are in general very pleasant people, living in good houses and making agreeable hosts, when they no more resemble the old financiers than our marquises resemble Regnard's *Joueur* type of the old marquis, it is very absurd to paint originals of no particular interest which in fact no longer exist.

And how some of these *fermiers-généraux* did shine in Society! There was Caze "with the grand manner"; de Jean, a clever man, exquisitely polite"; the elder de la Porte, "polished, a universal favourite, splendidly lavish, who kept one of the best tables in Paris;" his cousin, de la Porte de Sérancourt, "admirable commercially and greatly in request"; de la Porte Duplessis, who "lived well, was refined and always had good company"; Étienne d'Augny, junior, who "lived like the King of France"; Grimod Dufort, brother of La Reynière, "very obliging, having the grand manner and being extremely rich"; related through his wife to d'Argenson and spending 200,000 *livres* on restoring the sumptuous Chamillard mansion that he had acquired; Lantage de Félicourt, "an extremely polished person, thoroughly educated"; Le Mercier, who had received "all the advantages that a young man could have"; Mirelau de Neuville, "fond of spending his money, and an excellent host"; Olivier de Montluçon, "spending largely and having a fund of wit"; etc., etc. The "brutal," such as Brissard, the "dissolute," such as Dangé, the "pedantic," such as Durey d'Arnoncourt, who quoted Latin, the "crafty and vulgar," such as Vaucel—these are rare. *Arfure* herself had become sobered. Madame Grimod de la Reynière, at the sermon in *Saint-André-des-Arts*, having "only two or three chairs on which to settle herself," remarked audibly: "I wish the chairs could have been a louis each." "Quite right, my dear," growled an old officer from behind her, "you appear to have more cash than brains." Upon which she was escorted to her carriage, but no punishment was inflicted upon her. This anecdote is amusing; it is the only one of the sort, however, that I have come across in the "List."

I have kept until the last Helvétius, of whose *salon* Monsieur Guillois has given us a study; Le Riche de la Poupelinière

who " entertains the best and pleasantest company, gathering together the finest minds and people of talent " ; Le Normand de Tournehem, uncle of Madame de Pompadour, who did not fail to invite Voltaire (very occasionally), Crébillon (very often)—the second qualifying clause explains the first—and Gresset to join the circle of financiers whom he gathered about him ; La Live de Lellegarde, and his son, La Live d'Épinay, who dispenses a lavish hospitality at the château of la Chevrette ; Trudaine de Montigny, intendant of finance, the " bachelor philosopher," at whose house men of fortune rubbed shoulders with great lords, *Parlementaires*, and men of letters ; Dupin, whose social gatherings Rousseau has described for us :

Madame Dupin was pleased to see everybody who could shed lustre—great people, men of letters, pretty women. At her house one saw no one but dukes, ambassadors, *cordons bleus*. The Princesse de Rohan, the Comtesse de Forcalquier, Madame de Mirepoix, Madame de Brignole, and Lady Harvey might pass as her friends ; among those who belonged to her circle and dined with her were : Monsieur de Fontenelle, the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the Abbé Sallier, Monsieur de Fourmont, Monsieur de Bernis, Monsieur de Buffon, and Monsieur de Voltaire.

It is easy to understand the fit of bad temper on the part of Grimm and the *philosophes* when they saw the old portrait of a financier coming to life again, after 1750, in a sketch contained in the *Lettres Persanes* :

This man is a *fermier* ; he is as far above the others in wealth as he is beneath everybody by birth ; his could be the best table in Paris if he could make up his mind never to dine at home. As you see he is decidedly impertinent, but he excels through his cook ; he cannot be called ungrateful, for you have heard how he praised everything to-day.

The *fermier-général* of the eighteenth century was anything but uneducated or lacking in a certain polish ; he is also quite capable of conversing on other subjects besides food. Many of the financiers are artists and literary men. La Poupelinière himself, who is said to have patronised writers and artists " from vanity," has no doubt been unjustly appraised. Monsieur Desnoireterres, in his book *Voltaire et la Société Française au XVIII^e Siècle*, has vindicated him by showing that he was a man of fine intelligence, a musician, a designer even, whom

one could hardly expect to find modest after all the praise he received, but who was for the rest a man of taste and knowledge, of sane judgment, always ready to acclaim, protect, and make much of the talents of which he willingly constituted himself Mæcenas. His wife was "a charming and witty hostess with the most gracious of smiles and the most marvellous tact." She had been an actress, like all her connections, and a successful one; and she, too, was an excellent judge of things appertaining to literature and the theatre. The two of them succeeded in muzzling even that old bear and inveterate grumbler, Rameau, by intelligent cajolery; both of them were able to hold their own in talk with Madame d'Étioles, Duclos, Barthès, Saurin, Darcet, Raynal, Suard, Boullanger, La Condamine, occasionally Baron de Dalberg (later Elector of Mainz), the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick, the Comte de Kaunitz, Comte de Viri (and other foreign ambassadors who had no qualms about frequenting the *salons* of finance); sometimes, too, Horace Walpole, David Hume, Gibbon, Marshal Saxe, de Löwendahl, Rousseau, Thomas, La Tour, the painter, etc., etc. We must remember, too, that La Poupelinière was a collaborator of Rameau's and that he charmed two generations with a couple of airs which became famous: *Petits Oiseaux sous le Feuillage*, and, particularly, *O ma tendre Musette*, which the lips of our ancestors have so often murmured. In *L'Année Littéraire* Fréron calls him "this enlightened amateur of the arts, this intensely human citizen, this generous favourite of Plutus, whose opulence no one envies because no one perhaps would know how to put it to nobler uses." "Enlightened" is a word that should be noted; these "patrons" of the financial world deserved the title not only for their generosity but for their intelligence.

We can say as much for Bergeret, son of the *fermier-général*, and himself Receiver-General of Finance, who was "famed for his artistic tastes." When the subscription list for Corneille's *Commentaire* was opened, La Borde, *banquier de la cour*, alone procured more than a hundred subscribers and the Company of the *Fermiers-Généraux* brought in sixty. Many among these subscribers were sincere admirers of our great tragedian.

Adine, the *fermier-général*, was a colleague of Fontenelle: "Adine," we read in the "List" already quoted, "was one of those unique all-round men. He understood the business of the *fermes* superlatively well, and possessed the rare talent of precision. He was a member of the *Académie Française*, an honour to which but few financiers aspired." But though they may not be members of the Academy, financiers are in many cases authors. On 8th May 1757 Durey de Marsan, Receiver-General of Finance for the county of Boulogne, was received into the *Société Littéraire* of Nancy. On this occasion the director, d'Héguerty, replied to the new member:

> It was unusual in the past to see science germinate and talents unfold in the bosom of opulence; but fortunately times have changed. Among the depositaries of the State's wealth we find to-day, not only true citizens, filled with zeal for their country, always ready to devote themselves, their possessions, and their services to that State; generous natures leaning towards the arts and encouraging artists; but even patrons who devote themselves to Letters, and do themselves honour by patronizing them.

Then we have Fréron applauding this protest against ancient prejudices which prevent "the modern favourites of fortune" from receiving their just dues. "I could," he says, "justify what our Director has just said in a more general way by several particular instances." And he proceeds to mention half-a-dozen names. Clearly, then, the "patrons" did cultivate Letters. We need not recall the fact that Helvétius passed—though without any great success—from mathematics to poetry and to tragedy before he wrote his two works: *De l'Esprit* and *De l'Homme*. Claud Dupin left a book on Economics (1745), a *Mémoire sur les Blés* (1748), and *Observations sur l'Esprit des Lois* (1758). He was a *philosophe* and a man of fine intelligence, as was the famous Silhouette, of whom Voltaire wrote:

> I am delighted to see a man of letters become controller-general. He has translated a certain Warburton, who proves flatly that the law of Moses left no loophole for even suspecting the immortality of the soul. He has translated "*Tout est bien*," but when shall we be able to say: "*Tout n'est pas mal*"? Monsieur de Silhouette takes the line of being English, calculating, and courageous.

This old *Parlementaire*, turned financier, was to find among his collaborators and subordinates colleagues in literature. It is, indeed, not unusual to read in letters of that period of financiers, both Parisian and provincial, who "published" and were read.

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SUCH were the financiers of the eighteenth century. They gave the *philosophes* valuable support—not all of them however; among the people of fortune who were too stupid or too greedy for gain to see beyond their money the innovators occasionally met with indifference or hostility. This explains their continued outspokenness. Once they had put on one side the men who made noble use of their fortune and took an interest in works of the understanding, in serious works, in philosophical and literary ideas, the *philosophes* did not spare the Turcarets of their time. There is a story told of a performance of the comedy *Les Philosophes*. A financier who had come to applaud Palissot's production had, unfortunately for him, a seat next to Saint-Foix. This Cyrano of the eighteenth century, with his hand ever on the hilt of his sword, was not a comfortable neighbour; he would quarrel with one man because he smelt offensive, with another because he chose to order bread-and-milk in a café at dinner-time, and so on. The financier having remarked at one point that the play was very droll, the other turning on him replied surlily: "Monsieur, it would be difficult for this play to be as droll as *Turcaret*." Le Sage still lived in people's memories. Marivaux is shockingly unfair to the financiers in his plays as well as in his novels. In his *Triomphe de Plutus* he shows us a man of fortune who is a brute; in his *Paysan Parvenu*, Jacob, the servant, has for master a financier who is a reprobate.

The *philosophes*, while protesting against these injustices, did not hesitate to attack those men of finance who deserved to be attacked. They saw for one thing that the shameless luxury of some of these men was one of the causes of the popular hatred which they aroused, and drew comparisons between the modesty of a Samuel Bernard and the intolerable ostentation of more than one of the *fermiers-généraux*. Diderot

states that the first of the *fermiers* were far wiser than their successors; according to him, Boesnier was one of the first to display unseemly luxury, and he proceeds to name those whom he considered equally maladroit and imprudent. "These sort of people," he concludes, "must have some reason to fear being taken for swindlers." *Le Voyage de Ceylan ou les Philosophes Voyageurs* (1770), by Henriques Pangrapho (de Turpin), both eulogises Helvétius (under the name of Helvidius) and satirises Pelletier, the former *fermier-général* (under the name of Fercœur).

Monsieur Pelletier [writes Baron Grimm] used to meet clever people; that did not save him from going mad however, and the particularly clever person who wrote this bad novel forgot that fools are sacred and must not be insulted. Pelletier was said to be a very hard man in his official capacity, it is true, and his manner in society was decidedly boorish.

This was written without discretion. In the same way, more than one of the books written on finance, either by the *philosophes* or by authors who drew their inspiration from them or were accredited by them, contain very violent criticisms. Duclos, in the preface to his *Mémoires Secrets*, mentioned above, asserts:

Certainly there have been at all times worthy financiers who, having neither the opportunity nor the inclination to follow the straight path, proceed as honestly as they can along the tortuous ways that are open to them, leaving their stupid colleagues to admire what they call organisation. The secret of finance is hidden under a veil which every interested party strives to render more impenetrable.

The precedent being established, vigorous attacks were launched against the "stupid" and the "dishonest." The *Journal Encyclopédique* refers to the *Mémoires sur la Conduite des Finances* (1770), and gives extracts, such as the following:

The collecting of taxes has become so complicated, so difficult, and above all so irksome, that the only way to guarantee citizens against the terror with which this hydra inspires them would be to simplify and reduce to the greatest possible uniformity the involved methods of the financiers.

The quarrel became particularly lively with the appearance of J. B. Naveau's *Financier Citoyen* (1757). "These are two words," said the Marquis de Mirabeau, "that to this day are

admittedly impossible in combination." The *Journal Encyclopédique*, which is anything but hostile to the *philosophes*, analyses the work and makes the same objection to the title, which " combines two expressions which must be astonished to find themselves associated since their actual relation to each other is so slight." The author does certainly draw a distinction between financiers and contractors, considering the first as useful and necessary to the State, the second as a public scourge, entirely absorbed in his own fortune which he amasses at the expense of his prince and country. But he still insists: " The more credit the financier has, the less there is for the merchant; the more money the financier has, the less there is on 'change; the more substantial the financier's gains, the more debased the value of offices and property; the higher the interest, the heavier the commercial loss in comparison with other countries where the interest on money is low." Does he propose then to limit the *fermiers'* profit to five per cent. on the money they put down on entering the *ferme* with a guarantee of fifteen for their work (in place of the fifteen they are now granted on admittance), and to establish a bureau of auditors to which all registers and accounts shall be sent annually? Darigrand's *L'Anti-Financier* (1763), which exposes frauds to the public, is another of those works around which raged violent controversy in which the *philosophes* did not trouble to mince their words.

Not all the attacks on the financiers were of the same nature. I should not be surprised if at the back of Grimm's outburst against Pelletier there lay the wish to be obnoxious to his enemy Duclos. What better opportunity could he have than the occasion on which Pelletier was entertaining Duclos, together with Crébillon *fils*, Collé, Saurin, Bernard, Marmontel and Suard at his house, for pointing at this company as a " rowdy crew, flushed with wine "; or of describing the feast where " gluttony, pleasantry of a caustic and malicious character, and harshness of speech and manners took the place of true conviviality "? His parting shot is that " with the exception of Bernard and, *possibly*, of Suard," all these other " intellectuals " had " retained a certain harshness that recalls the school in

which they were formed." We know this grievance of old; it is here that our German baron's shoe pinches when he elects to pose as an arbiter of fashion. Now Marmontel has quite a different opinion of Pelletier. Above all, the satirical anecdotes coming from courtier sources must be resolutely set aside as "suspect." For instance, the story was passed round that Papa Poisson, in describing his daughter, used expressions which smacked of the brothel; and that once, being at table with a large gathering of financial big-wigs, he began laughing like a madman, being quite drunk. "Do you know what I am laughing at?" he then said. "It is seeing us all here in the midst of this pomp and circumstance. A stranger coming in would take us for an assemblage of princes; whereas you, Monsieur de Montmarel, are the son of an innkeeper; you, Monsieur de Savalette, the son of a vinegar merchant; you, Bouret, are the son of a lackey; I myself—everybody knows what I am." Anecdotes of this order we shall do well to dismiss, alongside of Maurepas' couplets.

On the other hand, it will not do to adopt Mirabeau's summing up of the financiers. To him they are all vampires, as he says in his *Théorie de l'Impôt*. As for people of gentle birth, we know how they talked of the financiers among themselves; here is a letter from a bailiff to his father: "The nobility talk glibly about the children of bloodsuckers and the vagabonds of financiers whom the Pompadour introduced, she herself being a product of this filthy set." Of the two we prefer the Mirabeaus, who at least did not go and borrow money from those they abused thus crudely. *They* owed them nothing; they might therefore, strictly speaking, be permitted to think them deceitful and unintelligent, and to say so. The Marquis writes to his brother: "Make a fortune! is what we say, and what children are told endlessly; as if making a fortune were anything but another name for winning the first prize in the lottery, the thing that everyone is on the look-out for. Fortunes are made suddenly, fortuitously and by sheer luck." So there we are, back in La Bruyère's time! At least we cannot accuse those who transport us thither of having short memories and no sense of delicacy; they are

not among those who knock at the door of the "partisans." But a courtier becomes odious when he makes insulting attacks on finance after living on a financier—and it is in such cases that the *philosophes* had the courage and frankness to intervene. Samuel Bernard received a visit one day from a great nobleman with more pretensions than cash. After the usual compliments had been exchanged, the nobleman, with just such airy and elegant impertinence as distinguishes Molière's marquises, remarks: "I am going to astonish you, Monsieur; I am the Marquis of F——, I do not know you, and I am come to borrow 500 *louis* of you." Whereupon Bernard smiles and replies very sedately: "*I* am going to astonish *you* even more, Monsieur; I do know you, and I am going to lend you the money." This was wittily said, but the *mot* is interesting from other points of view also. In the first place it was expensive: it cost 500 *louis*. Then it was remarkable as being addressed to a lord of the Court by a lord of finance. It is characteristic of the position which the aristocracy of money adopted towards the aristocracy of birth, and in reflecting on an anecdote of this kind we feel that the issue of the struggle was not in doubt. For the two sides to have been equally armed, the nobleman should either have had as much wit as the financier or should have paid back the money. "I lent the Duc d'Elbeuf five *louis*, which he has not returned," notes Intendant Foucault in his *Mémoires*; he makes no further comment, and the serenity with which he passes on this sum to his profit-and-loss account shows clearly that he expected nothing other than this indelicacy on the part of the Duke. The capital thus lost was too negligible to be avenged by a witticism; but it is just because the sum was so small that the Intendant had the right to despise this worthless fellow who bore one of the greatest names in France. What is one to think of the Marquis and the Duke when they proceed to accuse the bankers or the intendants of "filthy ways"? A decent man's first duty, as the plebeian Duclos might say, is to consider that "those who accept benefits place themselves under such sacred obligations that they cannot be too careful to contract only with those whom they are sure of being able to respect."

Marshal Saxe, when asked by Madame de Pompadour what qualities La Poupelinière possessed that could weigh with her in deciding whether to receive him, replied: "Madame, he has one quality which greatly appeals to me; when I want 100,000 *livres* I find them in his coffers; whereas if I apply to the controller-general, he invariably tells me he has no money." This was not well said. La Poupelinière had other qualities besides those of a moneylender, and Marshal Saxe was a man capable of appreciating them. However, he at least has the merit of being honest about it. But how could the noble accomplices of Dangé's blackguardly dealings turn and rend him for his vileness? Certainly, since the scandal of Law's System, the nobility had to some extent lost the right to despise the financiers. Prince Conti and Count Horn, to mention these two only, had given superabundant proof that some gentlemen, in their quest for money, could transform themselves into stock-jobbers without scruple, or into crooks or assassins. When the matter was before the courts the Marquis de la Fare let the Master allot to him the confiscated possessions of his father-in-law, Paparel, treasurer of the *Gendarmerie*, who was condemned to death. The contractor was not executed after all, but he died of starvation, while his aristocratic son-in-law plunged into debauchery and could not even remember to give the poor wretch a piece of bread. This Marquis ran through 4,000,000 and died leaving 500,000 *livres* of debts. Truly the La Fares had reason to look down upon the Paparels! When Nivelle de la Chaussée was making arrangements to give *L'Homme de Fortune* at the Belleville theatre, this being a play in which the financiers were vigorously attacked, Paris-Duvernay made de Bernis see that the time had gone by when the men who supported the State and kept the nobility alive could be held up to the mockery of courtiers. The Minister was forced to give way, and the piece was not passed until a number of modifications had been made. The *philosophes* took the part of the financiers against the arrogant and greedy nobles; but there was still a great deal to be done before the money-handlers were justly treated.

Louis XIV. [we read in the introduction to Madame du Hausset's *Mémoires*], struck by the skill with which de Gourville, Condé's steward, had put in order the affairs of that household, and by his talent for finance, thought of giving him Colbert's place. The Sovereign, as the source from which honours spring, reserved to himself the power to admit to his Court and to raise to the highest dignities those whom he wished to recompense or honour, whatever their birth. But in defiance of this maxim a regulation was made in 1760 that only those could be presented at Court who were able at least to show by the evidence of three original titles in each generation that their race had been noble in 1400.

In 1760 Gourville would not, despite his financial genius, have obtained even an interview with the King of France. This regulation naturally aroused renewed hatred of the nobility. It was at this time that the *philosophes* were setting themselves to educate the people and mould public opinion, and they lost no opportunity of avenging the financiers against the unjustifiable contempt of their insolvent debtors, or of pointing out the contrast between the dishonest impertinence of those gentlemen who despised "partisans" and their vile obsequiousness when they appeared as beggars before the very people they were to vilify on the morrow.

Voltaire was one of the first to stigmatise the Chamber of Justice of March 1716, which had been established "for the purpose of seeking out and punishing" those who had been guilty of financial malpractices. He denounced to the public "this infamous tribunal which spread terror and consternation all over Paris." . . . Duclos deals no less severely in his *Mémoires Secrets* with this Chamber, whose much-vaunted operations produced such pitiable results:

The only result [he declares] was to open the door to thousands of accusations, true and false. Terror took possession of the whole body of finance and their allies; money was hidden, and circulation totally suspended. A few financiers were sacrificed to the people's hatred. Credit was sold and protection bought for the remittance or modification of taxes.

Only the men of high birth came away with their hands full. The money collected was a farce, considering the sums which should have been raked in, and it was utilised by the courtiers. Those who wished to be "discharged" had to apply to these same courtiers, and naturally their applications cost them good round sums in hard cash. One great lord came to suggest to

a "partisan," taxed at 1,200,000 *livres*, that he should buy his discharge of him for 300,000 *livres*. "Really, Monsieur le Comte," was the reply, "you come too late. I have just struck a bargain with Madame for 150,000." On the list of taxed names Voltaire could read that of Samuel Bernard, whom he had known and who was described by him as "a man intoxicated with a thirst for glory rarely found in his profession, a man who loved all splendour passionately and knew that the Ministry of France returned with interest all that one risked lending them." There, too, were the names of the four brothers Pâris, of whom Voltaire frequently spoke in terms not dictated solely by gratitude:

> This was [he says, in the *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, referring to the reform which followed the System] the biggest, most difficult operation that has ever been carried out by any nation. It was thought out, drafted, and conducted by four brothers who, up till then, had taken no leading part in public affairs, but whose genius and labours led to their being entrusted with the fortunes of the State.

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AT this point a comparison between the opinions of La Bruyère and of Duclos on the men of fortune should serve to elucidate our discourse. We shall show how the free and independent minds of the eighteenth century, who were making war on social hypocrisy, avenged the financiers against their unjust detractors while giving them some hard lessons.

The tenth chapter of the *Considérations sur les Mœurs*, which deals with "Men of Fortune," begins as follows: "There are two classes which have closer relations with society in general, and particularly with men of the world, than they have had before: these are the literary people and the moneyed people." The two moralists have, in fact, their eye fixed on different men. Among financiers, Duclos distinguishes an aristocracy, a bourgeoisie and a common people. He speaks of "the most distinguished" of them; these are those who no longer seek, as they formerly did, the support of people of condition, but rather are they their rivals from every point of view. Our *philosophe* is quite well able to account for La Bruyère's biting and outrageous satire on the men of finance. The fortunes of those times were "not honest enough to be

worth boasting about. . . ." Avarice, the enemy of display, sufficed in itself, "without the aid of genius or any particular luck," to develop immense wealth from the combination of a moderate fortune and continuous labour. All men of business, if they were sensible enough to want to enjoy their wealth, would stop short of sheer opulence. But those whose own luxury in the past century was an insult to the misery of the people they had ruined, and who excited the covetousness of the great by their splendid houses and equipages, dinners and fêtes—these did indeed display a pomp which was "the height of folly, bad taste and indecency."

This unbecoming ostentation had not disappeared, but Duclos establishes a difference between those who come into money by a turn of fortune and those who arrive by stages. Generally speaking, it is the former only who are impudent and arrogant; the others have but to cast an eye on their own past to decide to proceed cautiously. The former are ridiculous in either century, but more so in the seventeenth, by reason of the great contrast between the person and the unbecoming ostentation; they were the more intolerable because fortunes made in finance were nothing but a lottery. From this time onward personal initiative began to count; the genius for affairs, of which La Bruyère denies the existence, began to raise its head—in other words, the talent which leaves nothing to chance and makes its calculations with intelligence and certainty. Fortune-making in finance "has become an art or, at the very lowest, a game in which dexterity and chance are mingled." To this we need only oppose La Bruyère's well-known lines in which he declares that some sort of intelligence is necessary for making a fortune, but that he does not know precisely what kind, and is waiting for someone to inform him. He mocks at the stupid and imbecile people who have died in opulence without having made conscious efforts to attain it.

Are we to conclude then that finance in the eighteenth century employed rational methods? No; it remains exposed to legitimate criticism so long as it does not arrive at the form it ought to take. But it is not in itself despicable. That is a mere prejudice. Granting that the State has revenues, that it

selects citizens to collect them, then these citizens ought to be allowed to make profits, " provided that the said profits are graded as in other professions, in accordance with the scale of work and utility." The fortunes made in finance are not in every case scandalous, but only in those where the fortune is built up on vexation and clothes itself in insolence. Strike those who are still " contractors " at heart; the *philosophe* will never think the chastisement too severe. But do not confuse these with the true financiers, who are useful to the State and receive the salary appropriate to their intelligence and their labours.

We seek in vain for this distinction in La Bruyère's pages. To have made it would have been to dispel prejudice. Everyone knows the justly celebrated passages in which the moralist denounces the " dirty tricks " that lie behind the fortunes of financiers, the crimes in which this opulence originated, etc. La Bruyère does not appear to think that things could be any different; he does not tell us that all this may be changed. He sees in finance little besides dirty minds steeped in mud and filth; to have money is to be neither relative, friend, citizen, Christian, nor even perhaps a man; " a good financier does not mourn his friends, his wife, or his children." So it has ever been; this is why the Hebrews and Greeks of old had an ineradicable contempt for tax-gatherers. Finance was yesterday what it is to-day and will be to-morrow. We are with La Bruyère in this generous, ruthless onslaught—he did a good work. For these excesses were legitimate and easy to understand in consideration of the nature of the fortunes and the villainy of their possessors in the seventeenth century. But in the middle of the eighteenth the time had come to bring matters to a point, all the more so as the declamatory followers of La Bruyère were no longer guided by the sentiments which form the lasting merit of the chapter on the *Biens de Fortune* —viz. love of justice, hatred of abuses and compassion for the unfortunate—but by other motives which Duclos was now deliberately to unmask.

And what was really at the bottom of all this outcry against finance, which still continues at a period when it should have

been possible to draw distinctions among the financiers? Was it generosity or justice? There would often have been justification for it on either of these grounds. But no, " it is envy on luxury's track " that is responsible. Financiers owe the scorn with which their profession is treated to the insolence of some in their ranks, not to the sorrows they inflict. The position is as follows: rich people " who were not born to be rich " (this is important) make a great mistake unless they show themselves reasonably modest; for the sake of their own utility the *philosophe* exhorts them to get themselves forgiven for their own elevation. By whom? By those unfortunate people who are sufficiently humiliated by the splendour of the " new rich " without being outraged by their ostentation. Popular prejudice against immense and sudden fortunes must be reckoned with; " great fortunes are muddy " and, following up the imagery of this sentence, Duclos contrasts the baneful, rushing torrent of a suddenly acquired fortune with the placid, bountiful stream of a legitimate one. One sees that he retains this very natural prejudice, which is not confined to the people only. Born of a family that had a long and respectable commercial record, he had been a witness of his mother's efforts to augment laboriously a fortune that had been reasonably large before it became involved in Law's bankruptcy. He was in a better position than La Bruyère to prove that " *savoir faire* and skill do not of themselves lead to immense riches." Duclos was of the people, too, in this respect, but less so than his predecessor, who boldly affirms: " In all conditions the poor man comes near to being a good man, whereas the opulent are hardly distinguishable from knaves." Duclos suspects those who acquire unexpected fortunes of being knaves; the others he respects. La Bruyère probably did the same, but, belonging more to the *peuple*, he did not say it.

In any case recriminations, though they may be acceptable to the vulgar, are intensely harmful to sensitive minds. And this perhaps is one of the reasons why philosophy took upon itself to defend the oligarchy of wealth. The nobles exploited the financiers; they should therefore, at least, have let their stomachs teach them gratitude. It does not worry Duclos

to see the majority of fortunes fall into the hands of a few distinguished families. The nobles squander the patrimony—so much the worse for them! He only reproaches them for frittering away their money without profit to the State. The financiers give their daughters to them, and re-gild the coats-of-arms; so much the worse for the financiers! They are merely putting off the day when the financial oligarchy replaces the aristocracy of birth: "If the wealthy people intermarried among themselves only it would necessarily follow that, by the sheer force of their wealth, they themselves would attain to the dignities which they now preserve for families outside; one of these days, perhaps, this will occur to them—unless, indeed, it occurs to the Court people to go into business." It did not occur to the Court people—not that they would have held back from scruples (Duclos holds that "a little pleasantry quiets scruples and a lot of money dissipates them altogether"), but they were too indolent, frivolous and notoriously incapable. The financiers showed them indeed a much more convenient solution: "Take our daughters"—and the impoverished nobles did not need telling twice. "Court and finance go into mourning together"; well and good. But why do the people of good birth heap their supercilious pleasantries upon the fathers-in-law who clothe and feed them?

This had long been the case. La Bruyère had castigated the courtiers who would call an unlucky financier a lout and rush to ask a lucky one for his daughter. "*Mésalliances*," says Duclos, "were instituted by men who kept their own name; the daughters of good families have only more recently followed suit, but it is a habit that grows." La Bruyère had exclaimed, some time earlier: "How many children would benefit by a law that should decide that it is the womb which ennobles!"—which would seem to indicate that many a daughter was only too glad to marry a *roturier* who had become rich, instead of sacrificing her womanhood to a convent. Actually, girls of good family made fewer *mésalliances*, and it is easy to see why Duclos thought the fashion had hardly taken hold. Out of all this it transpires that, if there existed a sort of good nature which refrained from humiliating the financiers, it was

sheer injustice and foolishness on the part of people of condition to affect to despise them. Philosophy calls the nobles to order on this question of decency in blunt and decisive terms. Such-and-such a nobleman has not formed a *mésalliance*, because no one wanted his title. Names are a commodity for which one cannot always find a buyer. Happily, if the argument of decency makes but little impression on the great, the argument of interest is all-powerful with them. They may jest at the financiers' expense in their absence; in their presence these grandees fall over themselves with politeness. Duclos enlightens us as to their manœuvres with the authority of an attentive eyewitness. He has made a study of people of quality in the process of reconciling their meanness and their external dignity; he finds that in the end it is always the dignity that capitulates. Philosophy was to show them up for the hypocrites they were.

He did not rest content with outlining the characters and manners of this century. His chapter includes a study of wealth in general, of the causes which render it important, the means of reducing it, and, aiming still higher, the possibility of bringing manners into line with morals. The consideration that wealth enjoys is such that the rich think themselves superior to other people. Whose fault is it? The fault of their own vain and insolent fatuity, La Bruyère would say; not at all, says the eighteenth-century *philosophe*: we must blame the want of dignity on the part of those who burn incense to them. Those who flatter and deceive them are guilty of base and artful treachery. "It is the property of this vice—which is founded neither on personal merit not virtue but on *riches*, position, credit and vain sciences—to make us inclined to despise those who have less than ourselves of this particular commodity and to esteem overmuch those whose portion exceeds our own." Thus La Bruyère. Duclos draws his conclusion but turns it against his predecessor. It is not the rich who are fatuous, but their flatterers who are vile. The rich, when all is said, are excusable; those who over-estimate them are not.

Philosophy, we repeat, does not deal gently with the wealthy.

It brutally puts the domineering rich in their place and sets up pride of birth, which commands respect by force of custom, in opposition to the coarse, revolting pride of opulence. It is sometimes useful to confront the insolent with insolence; if the one does not seem made for the other he should be put back in his place. "I have seen many an example of this," says Duclos: "many an insolent rich man have I put in his place and, speaking generally, I have been neither the rich man's host nor his flatterer. On the other hand, I have met wealthy people who are worthy of their riches, in that they make good use of them. I have lived with that sort and I learned from them these maxims of moral dignity: That those who pay court to the financier are base—and still more base if they accept homage; if, in addition, they repay them by ingratitude there is no name for their baseness, which looms larger in proportion to the scale of birth and standing of the ingrates."

There are still a few general considerations. The eighteenth-century *philosophe* would seem to be replying more directly here to the seventeenth-century moralist. To mention one small trait in passing—he recognises, like his predecessor, that "riches have no actual merit"; but they are "the means by which all commodities, all amusements and, in some cases, merit may be acquired." Here Duclos supplements La Bruyère even while he refutes him. If, as La Bruyère asserts, "the advantage of a great fortune is that it enables us to revel in the vanity, the industry, the labour and outlay of those who came before us," then it follows as a matter of common sense that riches will always be the most highly prized of man's possessions. "It is difficult," remarks Duclos, "not to think of wealth and the wealthy as identical. Do not all exterior decorations give us the same illusion?" It is, in fact, all very well to say that it is the gown we salute in the case of an ignorant magistrate or that it is the honour of which a man's red ribbon is the visible sign that commands our respect. In daily life it all comes to the same thing. This may perhaps rebound upon La Bruyère: "If we try, by means of a philosophical examination, to strip a man of all borrowed splendour, *reason* has the

right to do it, but I perceive that reason is in this case actuated by mood rather than by philosophy." What can riches give us? Everything, except illustrious birth, which, after all, cannot in itself procure any one of the multitudinous pleasures with which gold furnishes us. Riches *represent* all that is worth having; it is therefore illogical to inveigh against them. "Do we desire to have the right to despise the wealthy? Let us begin by despising wealth: let us change our mode of living." In this manner does Duclos flatter himself that he has demonstrated the inconsequence of all the outcries against people of fortune.

But the experimental demonstration of this truth has yet to be made. The *philosophe*, according to his habit, falls back upon history. Sparta and Rome, in their cradles, furnish us with two examples. There gold was despised because "it was representative of nothing," was in fact useless. From the day when everything became venal in these ancient republics, gold became necessary, and in consequence was esteemed and honoured. The same thing has taken place in contemporary communities. Our needs are greater, gold is more indispensable and commands more respect. Supposing that we went back to the mode of life in Sparta and Rome—Duclos dare not assert that we should be happier or less happy, but he does assert that money would have no value.

Perhaps there is nothing visionary after all in the idea of such a change. First, we could count upon citizen-*philosophes* to assist in the modifications; a king-*philosophe* would be even better of course. With good will a prince could bring about a change in the most depraved manners and customs. The task would be easy in the case of certain nations, obviously those who are faithfully attached to their sovereign. "Such a revolution would have the appearance of the *chef d'œuvre* of enterprise, but it would deserve the title on the score of the effect produced rather than of difficulties surmounted." This is no mere courtier phrase addressed to Louis XV., as the sequence shows: "*Meanwhile, things being as they are*, we need not be surprised that wealth secures consideration, call it shameful if you will. It must be so, for this reason—

that men are more consistent in their habits than in their judgments."

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WE will close with these words of Maury, the historian of *L'Ancienne Académie des Inscriptions*:

> Patrons of science and letters were now no longer always men of family. Fortune had smiled on many plebeians: financiers, doctors, and barristers earned a good patrimony. Some of these parvenus had, in the eighteenth century, a taste for letters, which they often cultivated with success on their own account. The philosophy of the period owed much to them; it was thanks to their support that the writers of the school of free thought found means to live. There came into being then, below the ranks of government, *an aristocracy of money which became an auxiliary of the independent thinkers*, and enabled the workers to affranchise themselves to some extent from the tutelage of power.

We have seen how it became the auxiliary of independent thinkers and how the workers repaid their debt; they paid it as free thinkers—that is to say, without baseness, frankly and courageously.

VI

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE *SALONS*[1]

Up to this time men of letters devoted to study and living in retirement thought only of the judgment of posterity although they were working for their contemporaries. The directness and simplicity of their manners was alien from the great world ; and polite society, less educated than it is to-day, admired their work (or rather the names of the authors), but hardly thought of associating with them. It was respect more than dislike that was the motive for this aloofness.

The taste for literature, science and the arts has grown insensibly, and has reached the point that those who have no such taste affect it. Those who cultivated these things were drawn into society more and more as the pleasure found in associating with them increased.

Both parties gained by the association. Society people cultivated their minds, formed their tastes, and found fresh entertainment. The men of letters found some advantages too. They were treated with consideration ; they perfected their taste, polished their wit, softened their manners, and in several directions gained the knowledge unobtainable from books.

These are the opening words of Chapter II.—" On Men of Letters "—of Duclos' *Considérations sur les Mœurs*, and it must be acknowledged that they give a good idea of the social standing of men of letters in the present and the past. The *rapprochement* between authors and men of the world took place at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the movement has continued since that date. It was much more true in 1750 than at the end of the seventeenth century that a man of letters was " of as little account as a post at the corner of the market-place." In 1750 he spends less time in the solitude of his study, and if Clitophon desires his services he has not to mount to a garret on the fifth floor. He will find the *philosophe* either in the *café* or in the *salon*, wherever there is conversation or the interchange of ideas. La Bruyère lived still more remote from the world than those men of letters of whom Duclos spoke. The eighteenth-century *philosophe* had more intimate connection with contemporary society; the author could no longer avoid being captured by society.

[1] See the article by F. Brunetière in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1st December 1906.

Henceforth, and contrary to the dictum of Clitiphon's friend, "He may be of great importance, and he means to be."

Duclos indicates clearly enough the advantages derived by society from this intercourse; we need not return to them again, as many critics have noted them since. But I should like to define certain advantages derived by philosophy from the *salons*, and to show how the innovators met in polite society valuable auxiliaries who helped them more or less directly, more or less efficaciously, with more or less good will, but who did definitely collaborate in the triumph of revolutionary ideas by extending their patronage to those who defended them.

I shall speak, first of all, of the material support given by the *salons* to authors. To be "launched" by a *salon* constituted, at that time, the surest avenue to success; the *salon* was to new and even assured reputations what the Press is to-day; it was there that publicity was to be obtained. Did a man wish to draw attention to himself, to have a chance of obtaining the academic chair soon to be vacant? If a prize for poetry or rhetoric was in question, talent would not suffice, perhaps not even genius; ask a Thomas, a Delille, a La Harpe, an Abbé Maury, a Chamfort; the essential thing was to be recommended by a *salon*. Was a man a candidate for the coveted chair in the Academy? Were he even a Montesquieu or a Voltaire, it was indispensable to have the support of women. That is how things were done from the beginning of the century, and d'Argenson declares that Madame de Lambert created "half the academicians of that day." Hostesses—I mean hostesses who were not content with dinners and card-parties—conducted the elections sometimes with marvellous tact, sometimes with wild passion; all, from the Queen and her favourites and the princesses of the blood-royal downwards, took a hand in the game—down to the Duchesse de Chaulnes, who, as the climax of her escapades, created a scandal by procuring the nomination of her lover. "The Abbé de Boismont, chaplain and lover of the Duchesse de Chaulnes," writes d'Argenson, "was elected to succeed the Bishop of Mirepoix. By the disgraceful acquiescence of the Academy in this shameful

intrigue that body completed its own disrepute." And certainly a few more elections of this kind would have destroyed the reputation of the Forty-Five. Years before, Madame de Boufflers, who had become Maréchale de Luxembourg, had secured the nomination of M. de Bissy, whose sole distinction was the eccentricity of his spelling. Commenting on this, Collé, Comte de Montboissier, commanding a regiment of *Mousquetaires*, declared that in future he would receive only Masters of Arts, maintaining that he would "have them all created Immortals since it had been possible to make M. de Bissy of the company."

But, for a handful of Bissys and de Boismonts launched by certain aristocratic *salons*, how many men of talent were advanced by the *salons* which the *philosophes* frequented! Madame de Lambert secured the election of Montesquieu, Madame de Tencin of Marivaux, Madame du Deffand of d'Alembert; Madame Geoffrin created three Immortals in a single year—Watelet, Saurin and the Abbé de Rohan; two years later she backed Marmontel successfully, in spite of the active efforts of the enemies of the *philosophes*, then Arnaud, then Suard. The Duc de Duras, Boisgelin de Cicé, La Harpe and Chastellux were nominated by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who was all-powerful after d'Alembert had succeeded Duclos as permanent secretary. And did not Duclos himself present the unheard-of spectacle of a young man received into the Academy of Inscriptions before having published anything, solely on his society reputation? Did he not enter the French Academy, thanks to the patronage of the *salon* of the Brancas? The correspondence exchanged on this subject between the Comtesse de Rochefort and M. de Forcalquier shows what eighteenth-century ladies were capable of when they sought to advance an author: eulogy of the candidate, subtle intrigue and diplomacy, fervid appeals to their partisans, epithets more than coarse for their opponents, all are there. They only stopped short of overturning the ballot-boxes. Duclos was beaten, and the Comtesse de Rochefort received the following letter: "I am incensed, but don't tell anyone, though I am none the less furious. It is nevertheless probable that Duclos will be

received on the first vacancy." The Abbé Mongault in fact died very opportunely, and the prediction was realised. " Such were," said Villenave, in relating the story in his *Notice* on Duclos, " the keys which opened and shut the doors of the Academy at this period. Since that day a new kind of activity has come into fashion; and the public can decide whether elections by knife and fork to-day are more honourable than those secured in former days by aristocratic intrigue." Innocent malice of a scholar who had not read *L'Immortel!* In any case it is clear that constant support was given by society to men of letters; I hasten to say that these are not the best services rendered to them.

The *salons* in fact gave men of letters the opportunity of rising to their full stature. We must take into account that with rare exceptions eighteenth-century authors shone more by their conversation even than by their works. Villemain was able to define the literature of the eighteenth century as conversation rather than published work, and the following statement of Marivaux is true of this epoch: " I think that men are much superior to the books they write." I will not go so far as to pretend that Voltaire and Montesquieu were more brilliant in their conversation than in their writing, but there is plenty of testimony that they were at least as brilliant. I might affirm in any case that neither the *Mémoires* nor the *Correspondances* convey any idea of the fiery and imaginative conversation of a Diderot. There are two authors clearly superior to anything they have left behind. If we knew nothing of d'Alembert except his works he would appear to us a " pontiff " of philosophy, stiff, stilted, a sort of Mentor, but more ponderous and tiresome; he was in reality one of the wittiest members of the *salons* of his day, with a reputation for his caustic epigrams, not disdaining, in order to divert his audience, to condescend to mimic people and give humorous caricatures of them; doubtless he had less dignity on these occasions, but it helps to explain the influence that he exercised.

Duclos supplies the most striking example of the man of letters; feared for his disposition, of commanding intelligence,

who, thanks to his conversation, secured a most envied position, one which Chamfort alone aspired to fill after his death. Duclos was a man who spent all his resources in society; he was so prodigal of his epigrams and his wit in the *salons* that more than one critic, who had known the man before becoming acquainted with his writings, experienced a real disillusion when he came to read them. "He was," said Sainte-Beuve, "one of those bold and daring conversationalists who pass their life in society, make their mark there in the first instance, maintain their footing there, but dissipate their energies in this way, and leave behind them no work equal to their reputation or perhaps to their real worth. Duclos exhausted his talent in conversation." How many witticisms launched by Duclos were carried by his associates into *salons* which he himself did not frequent! Some of them are harsh, even violent; they scarify their victim. "He is such a rogue," said the philosopher of the Abbé d'Olivet, "that, in spite of all the insults with which I overwhelm him, he does not hate me more than another." He was on his way to the Tuileries when he was told that Calonne had just given his *rapport* against La Chalotais. "Would you believe," he was asked, "that here, in the Tuileries, in broad daylight, this abominable *rapport* is for sale?" "Like the judge," interrupted Duclos. Other epigrams, less harsh, have the same vigour: "So-and-so is a fool. I say it, but he proves it." Yet others have a finer edge. The Solicitor-General Séguier came to ask for his vote, in the ordinary course, for the Academy. "To whom have I the honour of speaking?" "I am Séguier." "You have a name, Sir, which needs no honour, and an honour which needs no name." Others are simple puns. De l'Averdy nominated one of his creatures, L'Anglais, as Intendant of Finance, although he was a man in bad repute, or, as the eighteenth-century phrase ran, *une espèce*. "Excellent!" cried Duclos; "a Controller-General ought to be able to turn *les espèces* to account." [1]

There are other droll, unexpected sallies. In 1771 all Paris rushed to see an elephant whose prowess is described in memoirs

[1] *Les espèces* also means hard cash.

of the time. A popular rhyme suggested that the famous beast was a candidate for the Academy—

> Cet éléphant, sorti d'Asie,
> Vient-il amuser nos badauds?
> Non; il vient avec ses rivaux
> Concourir à l'Académie.

At that juncture the *philosophe* had a grudge against the Government. Duclos arrived one day at the Academy, where imprudent remarks about Ministers were being made. "Gentlemen," he cried, "let us speak of the elephant; it is the only beast worth any consideration about which it is safe to speak at the moment." Duclos and his fellow men of letters were continually striking off this coin of wit, with its own stamp of originality, which the *salons* put into circulation; at the same time the *salons* supplied men of letters with a field for the display of their powers of conversation. In this way the *salons* made the fame of writers who were esteemed the more because they were most distinguished in the peculiarly French art of conversation.

It would have been difficult for the authors when they returned to their desks to maintain the pedantry of their predecessors; society did them the real service of compelling them to express themselves agreeably and clearly. The *précieuses* of the Hôtel Rambouillet and of the *levée* had long ago taught the authors to shave and to make their toilet before appearing in the dim light of the *salon* or the broad daylight of publicity. The *salons* of the eighteenth century had a similar influence; nor do I see why what held good in the days of Madame de Vivonne and Mademoiselle de Scudéry should not do so in the days of Madame de Lambert and Madame de Tencin, nor do I see why M. Brunetière, so enthusiastic in his praise of the benefits conferred on literature by the *salons* of the seventeenth century, should find such bitter words to decry those of the eighteenth. It is true that the ladies of the eighteenth-century *salons* had lovers, while those of the seventeenth "esteemed" men who were not their husbands; I see much more difference in the form than in the reality. It is true that the ladies of the seventeenth century neither

housed nor fed the men of letters who had not had, like the marquises, the good fortune to be born in opulence or, like others, the faculty of making dupes. But every impartial mind should recognise that, throughout literary history, the aristocratic spirit has exercised on authors an almost identical influence, and if there was less decorum in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin than at the Hôtel Rambouillet, I console myself with thinking that there was less ridiculous prudery and tiresome fuss in presence of a vulgar word.

"The men of letters," wrote Duclos, "have perfected their style, polished their wit"; that is true. "There were no books," wrote Taine, "save those which were written for society and even for *les femmes du monde*." That is true of the greatest: *L'Esprit des Lois*, *L'Essai sur les Mœurs*, *Émile*, *Le Traité des Sensations*. We will consult Marmontel as to the advantage he thought he had derived from the intercourse in the *salon* in which he spent his life. He says in his *Mémoires*:

> The conversation there was a school for me, not less useful than agreeable, and I profited by their lessons as much as possible. He who only wishes to write with precision, energy and vigour, may mix with men only; but he who wishes to have a style which is supple, pleasant, attractive, and with what is called "charm," will do well, I believe, to live among women. When I read that Pericles sacrificed all his mornings to the Graces, I interpret it as meaning that he lunched every morning with Aspasia.

Marmontel lunched often with Aspasia; he had the perfect digestion required, and, if it is objected that he was far from the stature of Pericles, we will reply that if he acquired a certain graceful facility, if he has left us a series of sketches of personalities which a contemporary critic has called "illustrations to the *Encyclopédie*," we have to thank the good company of his time for them.

We may go farther, and say that the service rendered from this point of view by society was still more valuable in the seventeenth than in the eighteenth century. Well, it is agreed that the seventeenth century in everything concerned with psychology had an incommensurable depth, a delicacy of analysis unparalleled in any other time and place; and if to interpret its intimate discoveries to our innermost mind the seventeenth century found a language clear, simple and capable

of conveying the finest shades, society had a great deal to do with it. But certain of these qualities were even more indispensable in the next century; it now became necessary to convey ideas which the preceding century would have thought to lie rather outside the boundaries of literature, and with which it was little concerned; I venture to say that style is less artistic than in the preceding century, but also that it is less bookish, that it is more intellectual, in fact more serviceable. The style of the period is transformed after La Bruyère; it is brisk and clear-cut, the style of true conversation, a style which the bookmaker at the corner of the street may pride himself on understanding, yet so elegant and witty as to be attractive and lively reading. *Vive l'esprit* is the watchword passed on from one writer to another, from Le Sage to Voltaire, from Voltaire to Beaumarchais. We may now understand what Marmontel meant, and why Montesquieu and Voltaire had, from the point of view of style, much more to gain from contact with society than had Pascal and La Rochefoucauld.

I have kept until the end the most important of the services rendered by the *salons*, which was to win over to the new ideas people of good breeding and high social standing. We have made this observation about the nobility; it should be extended to all those whose position left them a little leisure. The *habitués* of the *salons* of the seventeenth century had become psychologists; those of the eighteenth became philosophers—I do not add "without knowing it," for it was with them a point of honour to profess great and generous theories, however disquieting they might be for the existing regime or menacing to their own privileges. The infiltration of the new ideas took place not only among those of noble birth, but among all those who would be overthrown the moment that those ideas were converted into precise and energetic action. I shall show one day the same infiltration among the regular and the secular clergy. Is an irrefutable proof desired? Read the list of subscribers to the *Encyclopédie*; beside the great names of France, you will find noble names of all ranks—abbés, magistrates, intendants, placemen, financiers. This is what society gave in return to the men of letters, and the exchange took place in

the *salons*. The idea of underrating this last service will not occur to anyone; in France especially, where the code of manners and conduct is always gibed at, but always scrupulously obeyed, *la philosophie* was sure of success when it had once gained the support of society.

This first epoch of our Revolution [says the Vicomtesse de Noailles] was one of great injustice to our upper classes. They are represented even to-day with characteristics which they no longer had, and they are calumniated in spite of the evidence of the facts. Philosophy had no *apostles more benevolent than the great aristocrats*. Horror of abuses, scorn of hereditary distinctions, all the sentiments which lower classes made use of in their own interests, owed their first impulse to the enthusiasm of the aristocrats, *and the most ardent and most active pupils of Rousseau were courtiers rather than men of letters*. Exaltation with some of them reached the point of blindness. Finally, like the astrologer in the fable, they fell into a well while looking at the stars.

We know what the great lords did when they emerged from the well; they crossed the frontier, persuaded that it would be easy to cross it afresh at the head of the enemies of the nation. But a great number of them were won over before the catastrophe and it is hard to maintain that the work of the *philosophes* was not facilitated by the *salons*, which brought them into contact with rank and fortune. This is one more reason for leaving to Voltaire, to d'Alembert, and all those who fought for the same cause, the merit of having prepared the Revolution of 1789.

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Is that to say that we need not consider the drawbacks as well as the advantages? These drawbacks must be accorded a large place; some, at least, of the writers of the eighteenth century perceived them, men who, like others, had profited by intercourse with the great world. I am far from denying these drawbacks, but I ask myself whether they did not already exist in the seventeenth century, whether they ought not to be considered as a general part of the price to be paid for the advantages which we have indicated.

I am not concerned with the *salons* which were not literary. There were, it is clear, in the eighteenth century an infinite number of *salons* which were negligible. In *Le Cercle ou la Soirée à la Mode*, a comedy played at the Théâtre Français in 1764, Poinsinet paints for us the interior of one of these *salons*:

"Ismène and Cydalise, weary of *tri* [a fashionable card game], and not knowing what to talk slander about, look round for an occupation. Araminte is finishing a flower in her tapestry; Cydalise picks up some gold thread; she has an embroidery frame beside her arm-chair, and with a yawn she begins to embroider a strip for a dress, while Ismène, at full length on the sofa, works at a flounce." The footman announces the Marquis, who, having complimented the ladies in carefully turned phrases, approaches. "He draws from his pocket a case, selects a golden needle, takes a piece of silk, and begins to work at the tapestry. The ladies watch and admire. But this is only the beginning. He leaves Araminte and her work, crosses over to Cydalise, takes her embroidery frame, and in a moment his quick fingers complete the outline of the flower. Then he dashes to the sofa, seizes a piece of the flounce, working all the quicker in his desire to be near the charming Ismène." This Marquis probably belonged to the army of Soubise. Abbés, colonels and fine gentlemen then occupied themselves with embroidery, tapestry, drawn-thread work, cutting out, pulling the strings of little mechanical puppets, according to the fashion of the day. A man would arrive in a *salon*, carrying his work-bag, afterwards nicknamed his "ridicule," which contained his sewing materials, pastilles, scents, bonbons and snuff. Naturally the fine gentlemen of the period could not devote themselves to these occupations without the accompaniment of tearing to pieces their neighbours' reputations; the *salon* was a field for the exercise of that persiflage which Duclos has attacked with his angry sarcasms. Evidently in speaking seriously of the *salons* one must eliminate all of this kind. They existed in the seventeenth as in the eighteenth. In any case I must admit that the gallants were better employed in parties which were frivolous and of no importance but yet well-mannered than in the cabarets where they got drunk, or in the streets where they were all for ever flourishing their swords. Let us leave on one side all the *salons* which were not literary, and let us take care not to be too severe on the eighteenth century, but to measure it by the standards of the seventeenth or the twentieth. "How

many agreeable things, how many useful reflexions do you not hear on the season's dresses, ribbons, coiffures and the art of dressing." So speaks the Abbé Coyer in a *Lettre à une Dame Anglaise*. We will not say that the remark smacks of to-day, for fear of offending someone; but let us admit that it seems to smack of yesterday.

We may take it that Duclos' reproaches are addressed only to society of this kind. He says: "Every important question, every sensible opinion, is excluded from these brilliant parties of *le bon ton*." And he defines *le bon ton*: "It consists of those people who display the most wit in saying agreeable nothings, and in not permitting the smallest reasonable remark unless it justifies itself by the grace of its expression." It would be a mistake to take this too seriously, for this is how he describes, in the *Confessions du Comte*, the *salon* of Madame de Tencin, frequented by the *philosophes*:

> I really found much of what is called intelligence in Madame de Tonins and some members of her little court, that is to say much facility of expression, brilliance and lightness of touch, but it seemed to me that this last quality was abused. The conversation which I had interrupted was a sort of metaphysical dissertation. To enliven the matter of it Madame de Tonins and her friends were careful to include in their learned conversation a great many quips, epigrams, and, unfortunately, some rather trivial witticisms.

Let us recognise that we have here a part of the truth (to have the real opinion of Duclos on Madame de Tencin's wit we must go to the *Mémoires Secrets*, and we shall see that that opinion is much more favourable); it is evident that society had its code, and imposed on authors tiresome obligations, among which the first was to display wit, to treat the most serious subjects like a gentleman—that is, pleasantly; the second was only to deal with subjects which were of interest to polite society—that is to say, too often to eliminate large questions and serious problems. It may be believed that where the second condition was observed the first was comparatively easy. Godeau, Bishop of Venice, in declaring himself in prose and verse "Julie's dwarf," and Montausier,[1] in describing himself as dying for love of her, were scarcely in danger of tackling problems too recondite or of dealing heavy-handed with

[1] *B.* 1610, *d.* 1690, author of *La Guirlande de Julie*.

subjects in which the code demanded the equivocal and pretty fancies of Marini and Gongors, excellent French names, to figure as patterns in a Parisian *salon*!

After all this it is easy for M. Brunetière to reproach the *salons* of the eighteenth century: "We owe to them the custom of treating serious questions in an amusing manner—that is to say, wrongly; for how can we treat amusingly the question of poverty or the advancement of science, or how treat trifles seriously?" M. Brunetière is right. But would he prefer the *salon* over which Julie, already mature in years and vowed to St Catherine till the age of forty, reigned, to enjoy the gentle pleasure of hearing stout rhymers dying in metaphor, celebrating her charms and complaining of her cruelty? Assuredly not, and the critic who has so happily defined French literature as a "social" literature ought certainly to realise that a great deal of time was wasted in teaching Julie the language of flowers. We agree that the question of poverty or the advancement of science ought not to be treated as opportunities for the display of wit; but in my opinion it is much more serious not to treat of them at all, to suppress them, not even to know that they exist, and to have no suspicion that beside this garden in which the rose, the heliotrope, the lily and the narcissus are made to express such tawdry gallantries, there is a desolate countryside where the starving peasant lies on his stomach to browse on the grass which the beasts have refused; to imagine that humanity needed nothing but the sonnets, the madrigals, the polite casuistry and the *carte du tendre*, that we are compelled to live artificially in a hot-house atmosphere; that we have all been created and sent into the world to serve the purpose of Chinese vases in a *salon*, and not to go out in the sunlight on the great roads along which the peoples under the guidance of science are marching forward towards a better future which comes nearer with every step forward, material or moral.

But, it will be objected, you cannot maintain that the seventeenth century was not a century of thinkers, a century of psychologists, unless you are prepared to maintain that to be a thinker one must treat of political, economic or social questions,

and that the study of the human heart is a matter of no interest. Now the *salons* of the seventeenth century did not invent psychology, but they made it the fashion, notably by the taste for maxims and for " characters " which they spread, and we owe to them all those original views on the mind, the sentiments and the passions which are the glory of our classical literature. Far be it from me to deny that the seventeenth century was original and that it brought to the knowledge of the human heart a notable contribution. But I do boldly deny that we owe that contribution to the society of the day. As to portrait sketches, the eighteenth century continued to produce them; I know many which are quite as good as those of the society of which Mademoiselle de Montpensier and the *Cyrus* of Mademoiselle de Scudéry were typical. Indeed I am astonished that so much importance should be attributed to mere trifles and that they should be credited with a historical, literary and philosophical value which they by no means possess. He is a confiding man who looks for truth in a portrait painted by the model himself or by his best friends. The Marquise de Fresnoy writes naïvely that she has " a lofty demeanour, a manner at once serious and gentle, an air dignified without melancholy, a clear, white complexion, animated with the clear red of the rose. . . . I have, *without vanity*, a brilliance made to adorn a court or to shine in an assembly. . . . My eyes are bright, illuminated with a fire which is as beautiful as it is dangerous." Clearly the Marquise speaks *without vanity*, just like Mademoiselle de Melac when affirming that her eyes " sparkle with a divine light "; just like the Grande Mademoiselle who could, before her suit against Lauzun, say without a smile, " I have not a susceptible heart," and, after having played her well-known part in the Fronde, could assure us, " I am no intriguer "; just like M. de Beuvron (for I know a great many men who from this point of view are women), when he declared he was as " clever as the devil "; and just as M. de Rochefoucauld when he surprises us with the remark: " I am not troubled by ambition." There is the same degree of sincerity in the portraits drawn by friends. Madame de Gouville, whom Bussy calls " brazen," and who is not too charitably dealt with in

the songs of the period, is praised for the "innocence of her character," and for the fact that in all her love affairs "reason ruled, and every connection was one of pure friendship." Who that knows Madame d'Olonne from the pages of the *Histoire Amoureuse* would not be astounded to learn from Saint-Evremond that "no one could boast that she had been in any way generous to him of her charms." It is true that Bussy had a scandalous tongue! I will not speak of the foolish trash which one can accumulate at pleasure; for what does it matter to us whether such-and-such a person "places her feet perfectly," that another is "very fond of her bed," that Madame la Comtesse de —— has "a pretty chin" and that the Marquise de —— has "a perpetual itch in the nose." Need I give examples of the style? "In exposing oneself to the fire of your eyes one must be prepared for some conflagration or for a mortal languor, if you are not merciful enough to moderate or restrain the violence of your charms." Shades of the Marquis de Mascarille! But Mascarille is there in person; his name is Linière. "I lost my freedom at sight of you," he cries; "in vain I cried Help! Thieves!" All the "characters" are not as empty or as mannered? No. But it cannot be denied that the great majority are of this character. Do you prefer in *Cyrus* the portraits of Cyrus and Mandane, of Mazare and Alcionide, of Cléomire and Thrasybule. . . . Appreciate them, but do not exaggerate their significance; remember that all these portraits are flattering; their bad taste is such that the admirer of the seventeenth century, to defend it against the charge of being ridiculous, declares that they "had a success which savoured of the fancy-dress ball rather than of literature, a success not very different from that of a clever riddle or a well-played charade in a *salon* of idle-minded people." As for the maxims, the *salons* of the seventeenth century have not the credit of having invented them, any more than the eighteenth-century *salons* can be accused of having lost the art of composing them. I am at all events justified in asking whether the two great authors of maxims in the seventeenth century were not great just because they stood aloof from polite society; the contention is less obvious

in the case of La Rochefoucauld, although I firmly believe that the part of his work which is forgotten to-day is precisely that inspired by the *salons* of his time; but it is abundantly evident that La Bruyère, who was, and was determined to remain, of the common people, did well for his own reputation and for our pleasure in making that choice.

It is the same with all our great writers. Our classic literature reached perfection through the men who escaped the influence of the *salons* of the seventeenth century. Corneille was a bird of passage in the Hôtel Rambouillet, but a bird of passage only; it was not his *milieu*. He went there to give a reading of *Polyeucte*, and he realised that he had wasted his time in doing so. Bossuet, a man of action, could not remain tied to the *salons* either. Molière waged war to the death with the *salons*, and raised against the *précieuses*, including those of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, the laughter of a nation which has always had a passion for reason and good sense. Boileau, whose motto was "nature and truth," fought energetically against them. La Fontaine had too much Gallic sense not to stifle in the *salons*, when he was not overcome with sleep. Racine was more subject to their influence, and owes to the fact the defects of his admirable tragedies. The two masterpieces of serious drama, *Polyeucte* and *Athalie*, those which contain the whole philosophy of the seventeenth century, and which resolve, the one the problem of the destiny of man, the other the problem of the destiny of nations, owe nothing to the *salons*; the masterpiece of the comic stage, *Le Tartuffe*, is so much above the polite assemblies of the day that they can claim no share of the credit of it, and it has been possible to assert that the century found its formula, not because of the *salons*, but in spite of them, even in face of the opposition of the *salons*, which might have retarded and perhaps prevented the blossoming of "classicism" and the production of its immortal monuments. On the contrary all the works of the eighteenth century were written for polite society, all of them, from those in which Fontenelle discourses on astronomy, Buffon on natural history, Montesquieu on common law, Voltaire on mathematics, d'Holbach and Helvetius on metaphysics, Rousseau on music,

down to the book in which Duclos discusses roads and communications. I do not ignore the fact that the greatest writers were able to isolate themselves and to escape society, and that masterpieces are born in solitude. Buffon in the peace of the gardens of Montbard, Montesquieu amid the silence of his woods and vines, Voltaire himself in the retreat which was imposed on him, Rousseau in the glades of the Hermitage, produced books which have received universal homage. But all of them returned from time to time to sharpen their intelligence in those *salons* where they were admired guests, and when they retired to concentrate in their work, the memory of these assemblies was still vivid, and the familiar public, awaiting the books on which they were working, was present to their minds.

Certainly I do not maintain that the *salons* of the seventeenth century would have been incapable of understanding the works of the eighteenth; I am told that the ladies of that day when they had lunched on a madrigal, and dined on a *bout rimé*, sometimes supped on a folio on *la grâce efficace et le pouvoir prochain*. I am willing to credit it, though I find difficulty in believing that there were many great ladies who possessed the solid and substantial education of Madame de Sévigné, and I am almost humiliated by the thought that there are so many learned and conscientious men among my contemporaries, endowed with a solid and intelligent method of study, who find it difficult to understand things which a young woman, reader of the *Grand Cyrus*, grasped at a first reading. Let us leave aside Nicole, too diffuse to be profound. But to digest Arnaud, and to read Descartes as if it were *La Clélie*, such ability is not ours, and I should sometimes like to throw some suspicion on the extraordinary comprehension of theological and metaphysical questions that is ascribed to the fine ladies of the century of Louis XIV. In any case all the sciences were excluded from the province of literature. Rabelais, Palissy, and Montchrestien had no successors under Louis XIV.; the sciences were unfashionable—that is to say, authors were compelled to confine themselves to the study of man, and in the study of man solely to the heart and the passions, and then

only those passions which had been submitted to the exigencies of contemporary civilisation. The great minds disengaged themselves from these fetters, and that is why they were great; those of the eighteenth century, on the contrary, had only to follow the fashion of their time to be themselves, and that is why the action of polite society was more efficacious and more real, and of more imposing dimensions.

I find, nevertheless, that Duclos indicates the inconveniences resulting from the patronage of writers by the *salons*. "All these factories of cleverness only served to disgust genius, to fetter the mind, to encourage mediocrity, and to make fools conceited." Let us recognise that a certain number of mediocrities were launched by the *salons* in the eighteenth century; it is almost a universal law for coteries. But when they are reproached with having made the reputation of Thomas and Suard, Morellet and Marmontel, why do the critics not add the illustrious names we have mentioned—that is to say, the list of men of real talent who enjoyed the patronage of polite society in the eighteenth century? Moreover, we think that the literary mediocrities advanced by the *salons* of the seventeenth century were even less worthy. A glance at the names of the academicians before the men of the eighteenth century joined the assembly shows many unknown and useless personages who would cut a poor figure beside Thomas and Suard, Morellet and Marmontel. I will end by a question: "Which of the great classical authors did the seventeenth-century *salons* support in their candidature to the Academy?" The reply has already been given: none, since these then very rarely frequented polite society.

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I VENTURE to say that even when they hindered independence of thought the *salons* of the eighteenth century rendered a service to philosophy. This is no paradox; on the contrary. Doubtless more than one hothead found it difficult to endure the yoke of Madame Geoffrin, this *sœur du Pot de la philosophie*, as M. de Lescure, author of the *Femmes Philosophes*, who did not love her, called her. Paciaudi called her the *Czarine de Paris*; the painter Greuze, to whom, as to so many others, she

had been rude, said of her: "*Mort Dieu*, if she annoys me again, let her beware; I will paint her." According to some, Greuze added: "I will paint her with a ferule." Grimm in his turn wrote:

> Mother Geoffrin informs us that she will renew the prohibitions and the prohibitive laws of former years, and that it will not be permissible to speak in her *salon* of home or foreign affairs; nor of the affairs of the Court and the town, nor of the affairs of the North and the South, etc. etc. etc. . . . nor, in general, of anything at all.

But who can fail to see the services she rendered, perhaps in spite of herself, not only to the doctrines of the *philosophes*, which she prevented from becoming a bugbear to the timorous, whose name is legion, but to the men of letters whom she prevented from terrifying the great nobles and society? She told Marmontel, who had been censured by the Academy, that she could dispense with his presence, but at the same time discreetly subscribed 200,000 *livres* to the *Encyclopédie*; she did not even like her *philosophes* to die without a priest; she sent to them, as unobtrusively as possible, an ecclesiastic who would absolve them from their irreligion; that was the proper thing to do. Some were impatient, and I can well understand it; but the men who were annoyed by this discipline could take their revenge at the "Tuesdays" of Helvetius and at the "Thursdays" or the "Sundays" of d'Holbach. Marmontel himself behaved like a schoolboy on these occasions; he literally romped, quoting Virgil the while. But if they had had only their philosophical synagogues the miscreants would have made far fewer disciples. "They said things," says Morellet, "which would have brought thunderbolts on the house, if thunderbolts ever fell for that reason." There were still plenty of people who believed in thunderbolts and who would have stayed at home.

Thus Madame du Deffand, in her *salon* of yellow moiré, with flame-coloured ribbons, where the learned were one day to be found insipid, and to be banished almost completely, helped the triumph of the new ideas; it was she who placed d'Alembert in the Academy, and who put Marmontel, Rousseau, La Harpe and Grimm in touch with the Mirepoix, the

Forcalquiers, the Brancas, the Luxembourgs, the Maurepas, the Choiseuls, the Broglies and the Beauvaus. . . . That was even worth some concession in the interest of the success of *la philosophie*. Let us add, for the rest, that no concession, or hardly any, was demanded in the *salons* of Madame de Lambert, Madame de Tencin, above all, in that of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, whose motto was: "Moderation in tone and great energy in action." None was required even in the *salon* of Madame de Necker, so pious, so frank in the expression of her religious convictions, so that (a feature too seldom noted) the most impious *philosophes* were the readier to make the most concessions.

It remains to note one point on which I can be more definite. I shall not hesitate to pronounce the influence of the *salons* of the eighteenth century as more fortunate than that of the *salons* of the seventeenth century when I consider the point that, thanks to the first, our influence in Europe and in the world was increased. I will not return to the dangers threatened to French taste by the imitation of the Spaniards and the Italians in the seventeenth century, nor speak of the service which Molière and Boileau rendered in compelling this literature to recross the Alps and the Pyrenees. From that time it is to England that our writers turned, but they were to return to England and the civilised nations a hundredfold more than they borrowed. The answer to those who accuse the *philosophes* of lack of patriotism is this. It is enough to recall that when our arms suffered an eclipse the literary glory of France shone with a light so dazzling that her popularity was never more complete; never was her genius more admired, never was she more queen of the world. Now the *salons* had much to do with the conquest of this hegemony of which we have the right to be proud. "Paris is the café of Europe," says Galiani, the tiny abbé from Naples; "foreigners ask, as soon as they arrive, to be taken to Madame de Tencin; there you may rub shoulders with Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, the Comte de Guasco, or with Tronchin from Geneva. Grimm recapitulates in his *Correspondance Littéraire* all the news which he learned in the *salons* where he occupied the place of honour and in others. Creutz,

Gleichen, Lord Stormont, the Marquis de Fuentes are brought by Grimm to Madame d'Epinay's; when Madame Geoffrin went to Poland to visit her young friend Stanislas, all the sovereigns, princes and ministers of the countries through which she passed came to pay their respects to her; the petulant —the too petulant—Abbé Galiani is one of the faithful circle of 'Sister Necker.'" . . . If all Europe went to school with us let us not forget it was in the *salons* of the day that they took their lessons, and let us be proud of having given those lessons, for it is one of our best titles to the admiration of men of all times and all countries.

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FIRST of all I conclude that the influence of the *salons* of the eighteenth century had its good and its bad points, but that the good predominated. Secondly, that it is unjust to attribute to the *salons* of the eighteenth century alone the disadvantages which are true of all *salons*. We must either condemn the one and the other, or absolve both at the same time. Proudhon was not more logical. "When," he said, "in a society, or in a literature, the feminine element comes to dominate or even to balance the masculine element, there is a pause in the advance of that society or that literature, and presently decadence." I do not see why, according to him, the decadence of our literature should begin with Rousseau, "*ce femmelin de l'intelligence*." It would have begun much earlier, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Our judgment is quite different; we recognise that women—that is to say, polite society—have rendered signal services to our literature, and we render honour to those of the eighteenth century for having rendered services more numerous and more important than their predecessors, because they were the auxiliaries of the ideas which form the patrimony of our nation—the ideas of liberty and humanity.

VII

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE BOURGEOISIE

THERE is a bourgeois type of mind, the permanent and general characteristics of which many writers have found pleasure in describing, but it is manifest that there are "shades" within this type and that behind its apparent unity we must look for the "freaks" which give to it variety and complexity when we are following its evolution through different epochs and in different surroundings. Let us see whether we in our turn can sketch in its essential outlines the physiognomy of the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, or at least let us attempt a more modest task, that of bringing out into relief the bourgeois type of mind as it is revealed in this period—the features which will explain to us how this class was dealt with by the *philosophes* and to what extent they succeeded in "getting hold" of it.

To help us in this we have a book of quite exceptional value—the *Mémoires* of the lawyer Barbier already mentioned. In the eight volumes of this famous work are noted day by day the events which took place between 27th April 1718, and 31st December 1763; they constitute a mine of information which has been continually exploited and always with good results. I can, of course, quite understand the mood in which Brunetière, annoyed with the exaggerated faith often placed in the truthfulness of such productions, declared that eye-witnesses were *le peste de l'histoire*—"the bane of history." "Just because some bourgeois with nothing to do took it into his head to give a loose rein to his pen every night which *le bon Dieu* granted to him," exclaimed Brunetière, "his compilation is supposed to take rank among historical documents and we are expected to consult it as an authority, to listen to him as an oracle, and to ladle out his prose in large quantities into the history of a great century." But, as a matter of fact, it is not as "an oracle" we listen to Barbier; and, if we rank his compilation among historical documents, we do not forbid anyone to discuss and criticise it or to compare it with other

documents and other journals. We are justified in consulting it as an "authority" by Brunetière's own admission that Barbier is "an honest man and certainly incapable of inventing anything," but only as a quite fallible authority, and after pointing out how "credulous, dull and of narrow vision" he was. Moreover, we go to his journal not for a record of the events of his time, but merely for his judgments on them. We want just to see his comments on the New Spirit which awoke his mistrust, and to learn in what degree and how he opposed or helped the *philosophes*. And it is just because he gave his pen "a loose rein" that we can attach some value to his evidence. He may make mistakes, but we shall find him sincere, and that is the great thing; and while we shall not "ladle out his prose in large quantities into the history of a great century," we shall not hesitate to use it as an ingredient in the history of the *philosophes* and their ideas and of the way in which they were received.

Other bourgeois have left us their memoirs, but not one of these authors belongs absolutely to the bourgeois type which we have in view. Jean Buvat, for instance, who preceded him, is not enough of the man with "nothing to do," to use Brunetière's expression; he is tied down to an occupation too unimportant and at the same time too absorbing—we cannot take him as a representative of the bourgeois of the Regency. A copyist in the King's library at six hundred *livres* a year, this poor fellow, who has no relatives and who has no spare time, is not "substantial" enough for a bourgeois; he belongs rather to the masses. Not having any loose cash, he does not presume to have any opinions. He records, indeed, but he does not sit in judgment. The lawyer and student, Marais, on the other hand, stands too high above his class by reason of his erudition and his distinction of mind, as well as by his relations with men of letters; there was even question of his becoming an academician. A disciple of Boileau [1] and a pupil of Bayle,[2] he stands apart from the ordinary bourgeois and is not characteristic of the species. At the other end of the century Hardy, a bookseller of worth, presents yet another

[1] *B.* 1636, *d.* 1711.

[2] *B.* 1647, *d.* 1706.

type, common enough and yet not general: the type of the parliamentary Jansenist, the man who is wedded to his beliefs, who is proof against the new ideas, and who abhors all the *philosophes* as impious and at the same time condemns the Jesuits as bad Catholics with their hands in everything: the Jansenism in him rules him out as an ordinary bourgeois. Hardy is honest enough, but he is full of mistrust and fanaticism. In Barbier, on the other hand, we have the genuine, unspoilt bourgeois. He is characteristic of his class and his period. He keeps in step with the century, proceeding equably and prudently. He is acquainted with all that is going on, all that is being said, all that is being written; and, if he is far from being in the van, he is not to the rear either. Nor is his mind a prey to any kind of fanaticism or mistrust. He is an avid and enterprising hunter down of news, and when he gets home he empties out his bag quietly, contentedly and good-humouredly. We can picture him sitting at his table of an evening in his quiet, ill-lit dwelling in the Rue Gallande, a peaceful, silent street. The light glimmering in the window tells us that he is at work. Presently the light is put out. Friend Barbier has finished his task. He has consigned to his journal some facts which have given him much amusement or some reflections which he feels have their weight and value and, with a mind and heart at ease, he has gone to bed. To-morrow he will resume his news-hunting and we may picture him going through the same performance in the evening again. He will be the same unspoilt bourgeois still.

Perhaps, indeed, there are a few details in his personality which are a little too individual to allow of our regarding him absolutely as a type—a few, but not many. For one thing, he is a bachelor and he has on his record—I will not say on his conscience—a certain number of peccadilloes. Like his friend Goussainville, of the Audit Office, he feels that the times are too hard for marriage. Goussainville has a mistress, Madame Pinon, the wife of a member of the council of that same Audit Office. Barbier has a mistress too, and, like Goussainville, a little retreat in the country to which he repairs with his friends. But, doubtless, his was not so very exceptional, and a good

many married bourgeois had their *petites maisons* also and drove out thither now and again.

In any case, Barbier was not a man to commit serious indiscretions. If he confides to us the fact that some trouble with a mistress has resulted in his having a fever, we may be assured that it was only a slight attack and that it was soon over. Goussainville, in like case, nearly died of grief. Goussainville, Barbier tells us, is a man inclined to indulge in melancholy broodings; he himself is not at all given to the dumps. There is nothing whatever of the romantic lover about him and he attaches to small worries their due importance and no more. He is a sensible man—almost too sensible, if anything.

The bourgeois mind, we shall discover, is incurably positive. It was Marais who remarked of Boileau, that typical bourgeois: "This man is the incarnation of reason." We must not look to Barbier either for real tenderness or for heroism. Here is his comment upon the death of a woman who had been dear to him: "I have lost a cousin whom I loved tenderly, and who loved me in return. A handsome woman, aged thirty, with an income of 30,000 *livres*, and loved by all." Yes, he was fond of her, but not fond enough to forget even in the moment of her death that she had an income of 30,000 *livres*! And when he sees the other *avocats* taking action in defence of the *Parlement*, he makes no pretence of any disposition to display courage. "Fortunately," he writes, "neither my father nor I had anything to do with this list of the fifty [the fifty *avocats* who signed the Constitution]. I hold that one ought to carry on one's work honourably without mixing oneself up in affairs of State in which one has no standing and no power." Why should a man be bothered with "upholding rights of the State" (*droits de l'État*)? One had quite enough to do upholding one's own rights.

His code, it will be seen, was not a high one. It was to some degree the code of La Fontaine[1]: it consisted in condemning as a fool anyone who incurred risk on behalf of others and in regarding it as a primary duty to look after one's own interests. A man had to be calculating and wary in his conduct. A

[1] The author of the Fables, *b.* 1621, *d.* 1695.

premier président, for instance, had a difficult course to steer, with the Court on one side and those opposed to the Court on the other; Barbier is not to be seen seeking guidance from motives of honour or duty. "A post like that of a *premier président*," he remarks, "is a very embarrassing one in these circumstances and one needs to be very astute and tactful in order to keep well both with one's colleagues and with the Court: and when in doubt one should give the preference to one's colleagues, with whom one has to live, unless one has a way out promised to one." The conditional clause is of importance. Have you "a way out" promised to you? No? Then keep in with your colleagues! But there is a yet preferable alternative! Barbier talks with admiration of a *premier président* named Mesmes, who contrived to keep his colleagues in the dark while accepting a lot of money from the Court and remaining highly respected there. What cleverness and resourcefulness! Barbier's admiration of such behaviour is apt to startle you if you do not know the bourgeois mind. A *curé*, Laugier de Baurecueil, a man of excellent family, was banished in perpetuity for having refused the last Sacraments to a certain lady. The report was current that he made away with the contents of the Poor Box. Barbier is not shocked. "Even if the report were true," he writes, "it would be hard to condemn him. Knowing what the sentence was going to be and being forced to quit the country, it was painful for him to be without money. He regarded himself as the poor person whose case was most urgent and the most to be pitied—unless things should change, in which case the money could be returned. . . ."

Barbier's moral code manifests itself very clearly in such passages. It is a morality apart. *Bourgeoisie oblige!*—and the good bourgeois knows what actions to avoid as being unworthy of his caste. He has a certain feeling for his own dignity and for his family traditions. His code is low, but he keeps to it. . . . The principal rule in it is to mind one's own business, not that of one's neighbour. He looks on at other people's affairs, but does not mix himself up in them. No uncalled-for zeal! —"*Pas de zèle déplacé!*" is one of his mottoes. He is quite

frank, moreover, and that is one of the most sympathetic things—I had almost said one of the most moral things —about him. He has no affectations. He does not try to deceive us. . . .

I would almost describe the bourgeois of Barbier's type as "an honest man who loves his own comfort." This phrase, I think, would explain many of his characteristics and would help to explain his attitude towards the *philosophes*. The bourgeois of the *ancien régime* felt that his own position was a comfortable one and he did not want to have his mode of life upset. We often find Barbier pitying those who are so ill-advised as to sacrifice their tranquillity to considerations that work against their welfare. But when the normally peaceful and reasonable bourgeois becomes ferocious and "sees red" is when his actual security and the security of his class is threatened. Barbier is never tired of condemning the police for not doing their work properly and he declaims continually against all disturbers of peace and family life. . . .

On 24th March 1724 the *Garde des Sceaux* [1] of Armenonville had imposed the penalty of death on domestic thefts. The property of the bourgeois had to be safeguarded against the cupidity of his servants. Two years later a cook was placed on his trial charged with endeavouring to get a sum of money out of his master by means of an anonymous letter. He was taken and hanged. Here is Barbier's comment: "The populace and many other folk have been calling this sentence severe—the hanging of a man who had neither killed nor stolen and who had never committed a crime. . . . But, all things considered, they did well to hang him, in order to make an example of him, especially as he was a servant and it is impossible to pay too high a price for the tranquillity of the public." Barbier, lawyer that he is, recognises that this particular case was not provided for by the enactment of 4th March 1724; but the bourgeois is true to his principles. Self-preservation is his first law of life. This Barbier is not an evil-natured man. There is much that is good in him. He seems to have been kind and benevolent with his servants. But when his own welfare and

[1] Keeper of the Seals.

security are at stake, we find him transformed—not evil-natured, I repeat, but an egoist through and through.

This egoism, this almost ferocious regard for his own peace of mind, is to be noted also in the bourgeois in his attitude towards the populace. We must remember that the bourgeois does not consider the man of the people as his equal and, even when amiably disposed towards him, cannot show him more than a condescending sympathy. One finds many passages in Barbier's journal which testify to the sense in him of superiority over the masses. When, in consequence of the decree of 10th January 1743, for the raising of a force of militia in Paris, a drawing of lots is set on foot, Barbier protests against the inclusion of the son of a merchant, brought up in comfortable and cultured surroundings, in the same list as his father's valet and servants and workmen and clerks, together with the bootmakers, porters, chair-men, street hawkers, hackney coachmen, etc., etc. He adds: "This is humiliating and a hardship and one may even say that it is going too far." A long time was to pass before these ideas were to be overcome. It must be noted that it is not on behalf of the *haute bourgeoisie* that Barbier takes up the cudgels. The *haute bourgeoisie*—that is, the members of the *Parlements* and the big financiers—were exempted. It is the *petite bourgeoisie* that he is so anxious not to see mixed up with the common herd.

We must note also that the bourgeois differs from the man of the people not only in respect to his comfortable circumstances and his education, but also by his bent of mind, his habits and customs, his entire existence. Barbier rubs elbows with workmen on fête-days and complains always that they are too coarse and noisy and primitive. He protests, like so many others before his time and after it, that there is a lot of talk about poverty and want, but that the public always manages to find plenty of money for fêtes and amusements. His tone is that of the man who has no liking for rough merrymakings accompanied by the letting off of crackers. He describes scornfully the popular celebrations in honour of a Spanish *Infanta*. He goes himself to a convenient place in the Rue Saint-Honoré, at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre Sec,

whence without jostling he can see the procession, but he avoids the crowd; and his summing up of the whole thing, including the illuminations—although these were better than he expected—is: "*Le peuple de Paris est bien sot!*"—"The people of Paris are very stupid." The bourgeois feels that it is all wrong that the populace should spend in this fashion so much money that might be so much better employed. *Primum vivere, deinde illuminare.* Moreover there was too much drinking out in the streets. . . .

The bourgeois was apt to view the masses, to whom he felt so superior, with mistrust and often with fear. He counted upon the help of religion to hold his own against them. A weakening of the faith would, he felt, carry away one of the dikes which held in the threatening flood. He watched, therefore, with anxiety those religious contests which were so amusing in the eyes of "the clever people," but which were calculated to undermine that spirit "of submission and of subordination to the Church which is indeed the fruit of ignorance, but which is necessary for the maintaining of order in a great State." The roles of *curé* and of gendarme have never been so frankly associated together!

Barbier is full of the complaints of the typical bourgeois regarding the greed and cupidity of the workers. "The workman," we read, "who used to earn one *livre* ten *sols* a day now wants to be paid six *livres* and he goes four days without doing any work and just squandering his money." Prices in consequence are rising tremendously. Presently we come upon the first indication of nervousness in regard to what we might call "the Socialist Movement" of the period, among the symptoms of which were the earliest known "strikes"—a phenomenon that filled Barbier and his contemporaries with stupefaction:—

All the difficulties to be encountered in bringing matters back to a satisfactory condition make it clear how dangerous it is to let the workers become accustomed to earning a lot of money. It seemed delightful to them to work only three days in the week in order to have enough to live on for the rest of it, which shows to what length goes the factiousness of this kind of people. There are perhaps four thousand workers in the stocking trade; on the occasion

of the first fall in the currency they claimed five *sous* extra for every pair of stockings and the merchant had to give them. On the occasion of the second, the merchant wanted to reduce these five *sous*; the workmen would not agree; the merchant complained; the workmen mutinied. They have threatened to beat with sticks any of their number who should take on the work at a lower price and they have promised a crown a day to those who should have no work and who could not live without that. To this end they have chosen from among themselves a secretary to keep a list of the workmen who are unemployed and a treasurer to distribute the grant; these were to live in the Temple; they turned to account the need that people have of them and played the parts of disturbers of the peace. Complaints have been made to the Comptroller-General, and a dozen of the men have been put in prison during these last few days and given only bread and water. This is to make it clear that the public must not be disturbed.

"The public must not be disturbed"—that is one of the axioms of the bourgeois. It is an axiom with which most of the *philosophes* sympathised also; and it serves to explain why both the *philosophes* and the bourgeois favoured a powerful Royalty, with good armed forces behind it, to ensure quiet in the streets and to guarantee tranquillity in the home. At the other end of the century even Hardy, while belonging to the out-and-out opposition, will be found remaining a loyal subject of the King; and we may say the same of Barbier. Their loyalty has in it a strong flavouring of fear. What Barbier dreads in the public rejoicings is the flux and reflux of the excited tumultuous masses, capable of any excess once they get out of hand.

To the mind of the bourgeois any kind of popular demonstration is a source of danger; and when riots and serious troubles are to the fore he becomes implacable. On every such occasion he is to be found approving the strong repressive measures adopted and advising new ones. In 1726, the price of bread having gone up, there was a rising in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine; some 1800 persons looted the bakers' shops, driving back the men on guard with a shower of stones. "Eight of the rioters have been captured," writes Barbier, "and two of them are to be hanged to-day in the Grande Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine . . . it is impossible to exercise too much severity and firmness in order to prevent such risings."

This dread of the mob is stronger than any other feeling

known to the bourgeois. In May 1750, when the people were stirred into passion against certain miscreants—men exempted from the army, they were—who had been systematically kidnapping small boys and girls of from five to ten years old, Barbier's first sentiments were of sympathy with the public indignation and of scorn for the inefficiency of the measures taken by the authorities to cope with the incident. But the thought that presently came to weigh most with him was that the frenzy of 300,000 or 400,000 people might result in scenes of arson and pillage in the town, extending to his own quarter and his own house; this, he felt, was a more serious matter than the kidnapping, alleged or real, of a number of small children, and, his instinct of self-preservation asserting itself, we find him saying:

> Apparently this carrying off of their children has . . . excited their feelings more [than their condition of poverty and want]. It remains to be seen what will be done. . . . Will an example be made of some of them? . . . On the one hand, fears are entertained of evoking a more general state of disorder; on the other, it is dangerous to leave this rising entirely unpunished and to let the people know their power when it may become formidable.

Here we have another bourgeois maxim. The people must not be allowed to realise their own power lest they should one day make use of it.

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THERE is, however, a certain solidarity of feeling as between the bourgeois and the people, and thereby Barbier and his like will be better prepared for understanding the *philosophes* when the latter shall begin to talk of social equity, of equality under taxation, and of the fair distribution of the public charges. The lawyer and the driver of a public conveyance have equally to pay their taxes; and this is a weighty reason why the former should interest himself in the poverty of the latter. We may recognise, indeed, that claims which are put forward in these matters are the more effective when they seem to be most disinterested—when they are put forward by one who has the air of championing a luckless neighbour rather than of defending his own interests. Now the bourgeois is always ready to champion the people when it comes to taxation; it

is to his own advantage to do so; but their community of interests does bring them together. After a distribution of favours which entailed heavy claims on the Royal Treasury, Barbier exclaims that it is the people who will have to pay. Only when there is question of money does the bourgeois begin to show sympathy. And in regard to all money questions, we shall find him to be very well informed. He always knows just how the national finances stand. He is always in favour of a policy of economy and he is more severe upon the Government for extravagance than for any of its other faults, inasmuch as extravagance leads to increase of taxation. "It may be said," he writes, "that under the Regency we have not merely lost our property, but that we have been harassed." The greatest statesman in Barbier's eyes is the one who keeps the Treasury in best condition; he prefers Cardinal Fleury, whom he is always praising, to Richelieu. He would have liked Fleury to live on for ever. "The State's finances," he remarks just before Fleury's death, "are in a better condition than ever before. It will be disturbing to lose the Cardinal." And elsewhere he remarks that the King has "much money in his coffers" and that he is "now, so to speak, master and arbiter of Europe." Some weeks later, when Fleury's health has been causing anxiety, he declares that the whole of France is filled with anxiety lest the Cardinal should die, for the Government, he says, acts as a rule wisely and kindly.

We know with what financial difficulties the French Government then had to cope and that, in spite of its frustrated efforts in the direction of reforms—efforts frustrated by the privileged classes—its financial policy was not brought into harmony with the progress of political economy. Now, as we may see from almost every page of his *Diary*, Barbier follows with curiosity the whole series of countless books and pamphlets which are published and in which the different forms of new taxation are discussed. And from all these writings he draws not only the conclusion that the State's budget ought to be administered according to new principles, but also that the people, rather than the bourgeois class, ought to be freed from a portion of the burdens which weigh it down. Doubtless he

is ready to forgive much to the Comptrollers-General, provided that the *rentes* are paid regularly. In return for the regular payment of the *rentes* the bourgeois will excuse even measures which he regards as vexatious, such as an increase of "*un sol six deniers*" upon every game of cards. This particular tax involved the collector's intrusion into a man's home, and Barbier was against such proceedings. He would have found it quite intolerable but for the reflection that *rentiers* like himself would benefit thereby. In 1749, when a new tax on property was exciting anger and the *Parlement* was about to make a remonstrance, Barbier questions the wisdom of this step. "The King is the master," he urges, "let him agree to restrict this tax to twelve years, and then renew it if he needs it. After all, we must reflect that such forms of property as houses and country estates have brought in one-third more ever since the system of 1720; while the old *rentes*, which have served to help towards the upkeep and development of the State, have been cut down by one half, and in truth without indemnification." What had the owners of property to complain about? The *rentier* was the capitalist who was really affected, the one who was the least recompensed, despite the patriotism which he displayed in serving the interests of the State.

Well, in the soul of this *rentier* we shall find evidences now and again of a sincere sympathy with the hardships of the people. This sympathy is evoked sometimes by what he sees, sometimes by what he reads. He notes with regret that taxes are being placed on all the necessaries of life, on food, on firewood, on candles; the indirect taxes distress him also because of the way in which they burden the workers and the poor. . . .

It is curious to observe how the bourgeois, as the result of bringing his mind to bear upon the masses, begins to realise that they are not entirely devoid of intelligence and good sense. When the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle comes to be signed, and the masses note the way in which their burdens have been increased for a result so paltry, they show their displeasure, and Barbier remarks merely: "*Ce peuple a son raisonnement.*" Later we find him recognising that the people's method of

reasoning is just as good as the methods of the other classes, and that its political and economic education has advanced apace in the course of a few years. It has got into the way of reading, or of having read to it, works dealing with public affairs; it knows something about the writings of the *philosophes*, the economists, the reformers. Like Barbier himself, it has acquired the habit of discussion. Barbier's tone in discussing the people and its progress towards enlightenment changes gradually. He comes to feel that the masses are not made up exclusively of people who brawl in the streets and smash windows, and that they have an outlook upon public affairs to which it is worth while to give heed.

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WE must not conclude that Barbier loses anything of his respect for the royal power. To begin with, the transformation of his feelings in regard to the people does not go so far as to remove the fear with which the people inspires him. He feels the need still of a strong hand which shall safeguard him against the wild outbursts of the mob. He will never get over this apprehension and he is all for the use of strong measures. The timid in practice are apt to be the most masterful in theory. Our mild-mannered bourgeois formulates maxims on the subject of absolute power which would excuse any or every form of tyranny.

"It is certain," he writes, "that in affairs of State those who have the power ought to act instantly and violently. . . . That is the way to beat down, baffle and dissipate a party which has never yet raised its head and which is not yet in a position to oppose force with force."

The King has the power, Barbier keeps maintaining, and it is right that the King should use it. If the *Parlement* ever has occasion to oppose the King, it should do so, he contends, "*par une politique fine et non point par une désobeïssance trop outrée*"—by a subtle method, that is, and not by flat defiance of his orders.

It should be added that Barbier sincerely loves the King. It is typical of the bourgeois that he cherishes a real affection for his Sovereign: Buvat, Marais, Hardy also, are all three

loving subjects. But the bourgeois, at the same time, is censorious by nature and he must have his grumble, so he vents his spleen upon the Ministers and upon the great in general. He is not jealous of the former. They and he are not in the same street. To everyone his own rank, his own walk in life: a bourgeois has his own habits and customs, his own circle of friends and acquaintances—let him keep to them. But that "the great" should ruin the country's finances, that "our poor money"—"*notre pauvre argent*"—should serve to provide their luxury was not at all to his mind. He has, moreover, no kind of liking for those public and official posts occupied by so many of the great—indeed he has a natural antipathy to Government functionaries of every description. . . .

In the world of our bourgeois the men in authority are roughly handled in talk. Every minister is a rogue—a *fripon*—almost without exception. Such passages as the following are quite common in Barbier's journal:

> In this country roguery is not punished and these people contrive to get themselves out of their difficulties with the money which they pilfer. . . . In this country money is a great resource, people think less of their honour.

Barbier almost believes that no honest man can become a Minister:

> M. Desmarets, who has been Comptroller-General since M. Chamillard, and who held the post at the death of Louis XIV., . . . was nephew to the great Colbert and had worked under him; he had been disgraced for some roguery with the money passing through his hands and deserved to be hanged. He was reinstated twenty years afterwards. Whom better could they choose in this country for Ministers than rogues!

And again:

> It would be very astonishing if any steps were taken in this country to punish the rogues in high position; for it has been long a byword that it is only the puny rogues who are hanged. Two or three examples would serve to make people behave, but that will not come about.

Remarks of this kind have not been peculiar to the eighteenth century or to the bourgeoisie alone. But what is curious to note is that this bourgeois, although a Conservative essentially, was unwittingly helping along the work of revolution.

This faithful subject of the King, despite all his profound respect for the monarchical authority, was helping those who were striving towards the downfall of the old régime. He was doing just what the *philosophes* were doing. He and they were working in collaboration, without his knowing it. It is strange that Barbier never realised that in helping to bring the King's Ministers into contempt he might also be bringing the royal power into contempt.

If he did not see this, at least he had vision enough to perceive that something new was in preparation. His journal ends in 1763: it would have been interesting to have had a continuation of it down to 1771, the year of his death. Already in 1763 we see him dragged along in the current created by the *philosophes*. We find him employing the word "revolution." We are far, indeed, from the epoch in which he could acclaim the reign of Louis XV. as "*le plus beau et le plus grand de l'histoire de France*." The Barbier who once was a fanatical devotee of absolute power writes as following in July 1763:

> We have now only the *Parlements* to deal with affairs. If now their authority and the rights which they claim are diminished, there will no longer be any obstacle in the way of a despotism safe from all attack; if, on the contrary, the *Parlements* unite in opposition to it by strong measures, that can only be followed by a general revolution in the State, which would be a very dangerous event and which would occasion the English and the other Powers to avail themselves of the opportunity to seek a pretext for a war, in order to lower the power of France which has been hurtful to them for several centuries.

Note the fear which our bourgeois has of anything in the shape of a revolution. He has his eyes on the neighbours of France and is afraid lest a civil war should lead to a war with some of them. Note also the unlooked-for note of anxiety in regard to a "despotism safe from all attack." Barbier could not possibly have written in this strain in 1741; it is a pity that we cannot follow the development of his ideas down to 1771. We understand his state of mind, however, even as it is: it is the same state of mind which we have noted in the *philosophes*. We have seen how ill informed they were regarding the possible methods by which the royal power might be restricted. The bourgeois is in the same situation. He does

not see clearly what can be done, but he is convinced that *something ought to be done*, and it is from the *philosophes* that he has got this conviction.

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IN regard to religious matters the ideas of the bourgeois are much more clearly defined and in this field he comes very near to agreeing with the *philosophes*. He is very censorious toward the representatives and ministers of the Church. He is at once religious and anti-Clerical. He is religious, because he feels that it is advantageous to the controlling of a country that not only the populace but everybody should believe in something. He thinks that it is for the persons of distinction to set an example and, if they will only do this, he adds, there will be nothing to reproach them with. The Archbishop of Paris is wrong, he declares, to insult the Parisians by accusing them of "a great falling away in their conduct." There had never before been witnessed in Paris so much devotion, he maintains, as during Easter festival. Never had he seen outside Notre Dame such a display of carriages, filled with the great ladies of the Court and all the noteworthies of the whole town —as many men as women! "If they were not all sincere in their hearts, at least they were fulfilling their religious duties in order to set an example to the people."

There are even cases in which he is anti-Clerical because he fears that religion may suffer through the follies perpetrated by certain of its ministers: "It does much harm to religion," he says, "to see a man who is known to be without faith and without religion in one of the highest positions in the Church." Not only does he condemn energetically all obscene impieties, but he declares that it is not enough that people who have been guilty of creating a disturbance in a church should be merely "banished" from the country. He would have them severely punished. He would like to see all priests and bishops beyond reproach. . . .

Barbier lets us see that he abhors religious disputes, also, because they seem to him to threaten the faith of the country. In September 1734, Colbert, the Bishop of Montpellier, entered into a hot controversy with M. de Tencin, Archbishop

of Embrun (to whose discredit Barbier tells us much), regarding the much-discussed miracles of "*le bienheureux M. Pâris.*"[1] Regarding Colbert's episcopal deliverance upon this theme, we read in our journal:

> This work has been condemned in Rome by a decree of 3rd October 1733, as containing false, scandalous, seditious, offensive, absurd, rash, blasphemous, schismatic, mistaken and notoriously heretical propositions. Nothing could be more amusing than this array of condemnations which they apply in Rome to everything that is not to their taste. . . . These gentlemen, in dealing with the matter at issue, characterise each other as ignorant, impious and heretical; *perhaps this comes as near the truth as anything uttered in the whole discussion.*

These remarks are in the vein of Voltaire. On another occasion we shall find Barbier expressing himself in the style of Fontenelle. "There is something rather droll," he writes, "in this religious dispute." He is alluding to a similar dispute between this same Pâris of the miracles and another shining light of the period named Gourdan—very virtuous men, both of them, he admits. But which of the two is in the right? Why, neither, most assuredly, for the two of them have been discussing matters which are incomprehensible.

These remarks serve to show the points of contact existing between the mind of the bourgeois and the mind of the Encyclopædists. The bourgeois is religious only on principle and from tradition; his soul has very little real religion in it. He is a "believer" and he wishes everybody else to "believe," and there's an end to it. Metaphysical debates seem to him all rubbish. That, also, was the attitude of Voltaire and his friends, who are always expressing their indignation and astonishment at the way in which the religious disputants waste time over problems that admit of no solution. "It is always being made a matter of reproach against the Archbishop of Paris," remarks Barbier, "that he is so fond of food. But he is better employed in eating than in disputing over nothing." An Archbishop who is a gourmand is not a danger to society, but an Archbishop who indulges in dissertations on the subject of "grace" is a very serious danger.

[1] François de Pâris, *b.* 1690, *d.* 1727, a famous Jansenist.

Barbier does not like the Jesuits. He does not go so far as Hardy, who sees everywhere the hand of the " men in black," but he is continually expressing his fear and distrust of them and of their actions:

> The Jesuits [he writes] are keeping quiet and they do not even write to each other from one province to another, because for a long time past the seals of their letters have been broken open. . . . Now at last, since 8th May, we have a new Pope; his name is Michael Conti. It is said that he is not a friend of the Jesuits; they will contrive to make him their friend. . . . The Jesuits will attain their ends, whether by means of threats and violence towards some or of rewards and benefactions towards others.

On another occasion (in August 1729) he records gleefully certain public demonstrations of hostility to the Jesuits in Paris, and the performance of satirical plays at their expense, *Les Fourberies d'Ignace*[1] and *Arlequin Jésuite*. But he has no blind hatred for them. He notes the good points about them with impartiality and although he admires La Chalotais, their severe critic, he goes so far as to admit that their reply to his famous indictment is not merely a " solid " performance but contains some " lively and piquant " points at the expense of La Chalotais himself. One suspects that had he sons of his own, Barbier would even have been disposed to send them to a Jesuit college. He does not like either the University or the Sorbonne, and he admits that the best colleges are those of the Society of Jesus. He comments upon the curious fact that these colleges are in great favour with parents despite the " marked hatred " with which the Jesuits themselves are regarded. The explanation, he thinks, is merely that this hatred is the outcome of a dispute of a purely religious kind, " as to which ordinary honest folk, whether of the Court or of the town, do not much concern themselves and which they scarcely understand. It is enough for them to know that they [the Jesuits] educate their pupils perfectly as a general thing." The Jansenists in Paris, he adds, consist largely of dried-up professors, parish priests, and such like, few of them with children to educate.

[1] " The Deceits of Ignatius "—*i.e.* St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

Barbier dislikes the Jansenists. Their intolerance repels him. He draws no distinction between Saint-Cyran and Pâris, between Pascal and Colbert de Montpellier. The Jansenists of yesterday were as devoid of sense, he holds, as those of to-day. This is what he has to say about a Jansenist brochure reprinted in 1758:

> Everyone knows that the abbé of Saint-Cyran, Jansenius and M. Arnaud were the founders and the great champions of Jansenism which . . . has been greatly condemned. It seems out of place, therefore, to indulge in such high praise of these personages. To do so is to offer a sort of gratuitous insult to the clergy of to-day.

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WHAT we must particularly bear in mind is that the bourgeois loves his tranquillity above everything. He is weary of listening to acrimonious theological debates and he would prefer, as a general thing, to see the Government abstain from taking any part in such things. Barbier is not consistent, however, in regard to this point. At one moment we find him blaming the Government for taking measures against Jansenism which might have become extinct through the death of its most zealous supporters; at another he writes:

> There has been too much weakness on the part of the Ministry in regard to this Jansenist Party, which in Paris now comprises two-thirds of all classes, but especially of the populace, and which is inspired by a number of priests who have been ousted from their *cures* and who subsist entirely on the alms given them by the Party and on the appearances of a saintly life and pure morals. All these nocturnal meetings concerned with religion, which in all countries is nothing else but superstition, ought not to be tolerated.

The journal is full of such impatient references to religious zealots of all hues. Barbier declares in one place that all pamphlets and all newspapers, whether on the Jesuit side or the Jansenist, dealing in violent language with religious matters, ought to be suppressed. . . .

As regards some of the administrative reforms desirable in France in the matter of the clergy, Barbier is frequently of the same mind as the *philosophes*. For instance, he favours a raising of the minimum age at which novices can be received in monasteries and convents from fifteen or sixteen to twenty-six

for monks, and twenty-two for nuns, as this will diminish the number of those who will enter such establishments merely "from discontent or idleness or other reasons" without knowing what is involved in the step they are taking; while he would like to see the ordinary clergy paying their taxes like other citizens:

> There has been much talk [he writes] of the plan to make the clergy pay a twentieth part of their goods and revenues—a plan with many good points; first it would ascertain precisely what the ecclesiastical revenues consist of, for they constitute too considerable a portion of the revenues of the kingdom; second, it would make them contribute like other subjects to the expenses of the State.

When eventually this project is abandoned, Barbier expresses his dissatisfaction thus: "The clergy has won, and the authority of the King, as well as the real rights of the State, will suffer thereby. It must be admitted that the ecclesiastical gentry have long arms and are even to be feared, and this fear may well be the motive of the compromise come to." The clergy, he goes on to say, however much people may despise them, are a real force alike at the Court and in the country, and are undoubtedly a force to be feared. Bourgeois and Catholic though he be, his accents are almost identical with the accents of the *philosophes*.

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BUT, it may be here objected, if such were the opinions of the typical bourgeois of the eighteenth century, what rôle remained for the *philosophe* to play? This question may now be answered.

Without a doubt the mind of the bourgeois had come to partake of the mind of the *philosophes*, but its evolution in this direction would have been less swift and less profound if the *philosophes* had not been there to influence it. The essentially new thing about the bourgeois of the eighteenth century was that he began to give serious attention to books and to the writers of books and to the ideas which they promulgated. The tendency of the bourgeois had hitherto been to refuse to take men of letters seriously. Even Marais, himself so cultured and erudite, regarded literature merely as an unimportant

distraction. Barbier also was inclined to this view. One feels that he is not acquainted with men of letters and that he frequents company to which they are strangers. He is not well informed as to what happens at the Academy and he regards the Forty as mere pedantic officials.

And yet if we read his *Mémoires* carefully we shall find him taking more and more interest in all that is being written in France and abroad. We shall find him pondering over what he reads and becoming a good client to the bookseller. Gradually he comes to regard both politics and literature as things well worthy of attention. . . .

Barbier read and pondered over the writings of the Encyclopædists, as we may see from such passages as the following :

> In order to attain this aim of bringing about tranquillity, all theses upon grace in general, without any qualification whatever, should be proscribed and it should be forbidden to speak in this connection of St Paul, St Augustine or St Thomas. . . .
>
> I have at last succeeded in procuring the *Livre des Mœurs* [by Toussaint] which the decree of 6th May 1748 has made very dear and very rare. It must be said that few people have given a thought to this book, whereas in certain circles there is nobody, man or woman, who has not been wishing to see it—everyone asking "Have you read *les Mœurs*?" A single copy will pass swiftly into fifty hands. The taste for forbidden things and curiosity about them are also on the increase.

Barbier comments on this particular book for whole pages together and gives us extracts from it :

> What does it matter [he asks] whether God is round or triangular; whether purity is expressed by water or by fire; whether an ox or an elephant be offered up to him, a sheep or a ram, whether animals be sacrificed to him or only vegetables? The necessity of giving to God an external worship does not prove anything in favour of either the one or the other. Perhaps God himself is not more displeased by the diversity of the homages shown him in the different religions than he is by the fact that in the Roman Church some monks recite Matins at midnight, others in the morning.

And if he condemns Toussaint's book, he does so only on the ground that tranquillity is a boon worth securing at any price. The *Livre des Mœurs*, being calculated to undermine religion, is "very dangerous," he feels, and although it is "full of the most beautiful sentiments" of every description, it ought not to be countenanced in any country. . . . Were he

a Turk, Barbier would feel the same. He would exact the same respect for the religion of Mahomet that in France he asks for the religion of Christ. . . .

When the Abbé de Prades (who is supposed to have had Diderot behind him in his contest with the Sorbonne) is forced to quit Paris and take refuge in Berlin with the King of Prussia, Barbier writes:

> In getting rid of the Abbé de Prades and in declaring his thesis to be an impious one, the aim of the cabal was to destroy the enterprise of the dictionary of the *Encyclopédie*; it was generally believed indeed that the second volume would be stopped.

Barbier, as we find presently, was actually a subscriber to the *Encyclopédie* and his journal shows that he fully realised that there was a big battle in progress. He becomes indignant when the great work is unjustly threatened. The real danger to religion is not from the Encyclopædists, he feels; it is rather from the maladroit archbishops and intolerant ecclesiastics who would like to persecute them. . . .

Barbier is nervous also when any of the Encyclopædists does anything to jeopardise the undertaking. He notes that d'Alembert has replied to a Jesuit critic of the *Encyclopédie* in "a lively and insolent letter," and he feels that "the rashness of this young man" will place its managers in a difficult position. As for the hostile attitude of the Jesuits, he declares it is due to jealousy on their part at not having been invited to take a share in the work. . . .

When Morellet's famous pamphlet makes its appearance, our bourgeois hastens to buy, and is enthusiastic over it.

"This pamphlet," he declares, "is written wonderfully and with the most delicate malignity; but the portrait drawn of the devout people may be dangerous for the author. It has long been known that the enemies of the *Encyclopédie* and of the *philosophes* have been the Jesuits and the Court.

He becomes more enthusiastic still when he hears the name of the author of it. He writes:

> It is the Abbé Morellet, a man of distinguished talents, who is only thirty-five years old, and who has done some very important theological articles for the *Encyclopédie*, as for instance *Foi*, *Fils de Dieu*, *Fatalité*. It is surprising,

in fact, that this man of profound thought, who has written such serious articles, should have contrived to achieve with so much delicacy a purely frivolous work. . . .

When Montesquieu dies, Barbier devotes a few lines to the author of those books which were " condemned as very much opposed to the Catholic faith, but which are none the less regarded as scientific masterpieces."

Some of Barbier's comments are very much to the point. The Abbé de Prades had been accused of having given evidence of " materialism " in that thesis of his which had entailed his banishment from France. In regard to this we read :

It is said that the Abbé de Prades is a pupil of the materialistic school which centres round Diderot. Diderot, however, when combating the theory of Descartes regarding the souls of animals, which, according to that *philosophe*, are automata merely and pure machines, urges, on the contrary, that the animals have in them *un principe pensant immateriel* : that is a long way from being a materialist !

The following remark, which comes immediately after the above, is certainly not suggestive of a superficial reader :

The same thing may be said also about the *Histoire Naturelle* of M. de Buffon, which is a very fine work, wherein he has given an account of the creation of the world different from that of Moses.

And here we have Barbier's impressions in regard to Rousseau :

The *Parlement* has had burnt by the hand of the Executioner on the 11th of this month a book in four volumes in 8° by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, entitled *Émile, ou l'Éducation*. . . . For the last month this book has been much talked about and been circulating in Paris where people appreciate the philosophical mind of the author *qui écrit au-dessus de tout.*

And the following sentence suggests that Barbier really understood Rousseau :

Rousseau was the kind of man who would face imprisonment in defence of the truth of his book ; but it is reported that one of his kind friends made him get into a post-chaise and disappear from France. . . .

The man of letters was no longer disreputable in the eyes of the bourgeois at this date. In the face of such utterances,

Barbier is not to be condemned as having held completely aloof from the generous movement of the *philosophes* and as having remained unchanged in his pusillanimity and egoism.

* * * * * * * *

How is one to explain the fact that a bourgeois Conservative of the type of Barbier, preoccupied with his own tranquillity, should have been able to harbour any sympathy with these innovating Encyclopædists who threatened to turn everything upside down? What became of his prudence, that pre-eminently bourgeois quality? How could a devotee of the established order of things allow himself to be won over by those devastators of prejudices and beliefs?

To begin with, Barbier, as Brunetière has declared, is a man of narrow outlook. I do not mean that he was not intelligent, but that his intelligence was circumscribed: it was limited to his common sense. The bourgeois placed all his confidence in his own reasoning faculties and submitted all problems to it: those which he could not reason out he simply knocked on the head, ruling them out as absurd and inexplicable. Any investigation into them seemed to him useless and even dangerous. The difference between the *philosophe* and the bourgeois was that the former deliberately and of set purpose forbade himself all metaphysical discussion, while the latter would have been incapable of anything of the kind had he wished to indulge in it. The bourgeois laid it down as a principle that religion was useful, but on condition that people performed their religious duties without discussing them. Merely to possess faith was a small matter: to devote thought to it rarely, to talk about it never—that was one's essential duty. What he understood by freedom of conscience was abstention from expressing opinions on intangible subjects which could not be settled by any marshalling of evidence. Now the *philosophes* seemed to say and think the same thing:

A pious woman in a temper said to her next-door neighbour: "I shall break your head open with my pot." "What have you got in your pot?" asked the other. "A nice fat capon," answered the pious woman. "Very well, then,"

rejoined the good neighbour, "let's eat it together!" And that is how we ought to behave. You are all great madmen, you Molinists and Jansenists and Encyclopædists.

These lines are from Voltaire, but they express Barbier's outlook too. Insignificant disputes should be settled amicably and, if they are not, the State should put an end to them without anyone's having any right to be angry:

The Council of Nice was called together in the year 325 after Constantine had written, and had dispatched by Osius, that fine letter to the somewhat quarrelsome clergy of Alexandria: "You are quarrelling over a very simple matter. These subtleties are unworthy of reasonable people."

Had Barbier been set to write the history of that Council, he would have taken the same line as Voltaire. What can it matter to the State or to morals, Voltaire asked, whether Jesus ever lived or not? What can it matter to business, is the reflection of the bourgeois. There is a shade of difference, but only a shade. Certainly the bourgeois saw nothing to be shocked at in Voltaire's tone. Why should he be shocked by irreverent handling of miracles, prophecies, sacred legends? Barbier himself indulged in pleasantries in regard to Lot's daughters and the story of Jonah, etc. Of course, if the masses were to follow suit, that would be a different thing. But so long as the daring jests were kept within a circle of people of standing, who knew how to express themselves, well, there was nothing to be feared. Barbier feared only one thing—materialism; and he was quite incapable of discerning materialistic tendencies in a philosophical work.

It was enough for him if religion was not undermined; he saw no objection to good-humoured criticism of the dogmas or of the ministers of the Church. He was ready to admit that they stood in need of it. In the same way, it was enough for him that the respect due to Royalty should not be weakened; people might attack its props and its representatives and the political and economic administration of the country as much as ever they liked. Barbier himself gives us the following practical application of this tenet:

It is reported that there appeared three weeks ago some appalling verses against the King. . . . It is said that a young man who had a copy of these

verses has been arrested and that he declared that M. Sigorgne, Professor of Philosophy at Plessis, had dictated them to him, having them by heart. This Professor has been arrested, as well as several others who are being questioned. They have arrested also M. Diderot, who is suspected of being the author of a pamphlet which has appeared under the name of *Thérèse la Philosophe*. In this book, which is charming and very well written, there are some extremely strong and very dangerous conversations regarding natural religion. He is charged also with being the author of other books of this kind, such as *Pensées Philosophiques*. In regard to these writings, whose only crime is their wit, as they are read by only a few persons, their good repute and interest may save this kind of people, but as for the authors of the outrageous verses against the King, there should be no mercy for them and they should be punished severely.

M. Ducros, in his book *Les Encyclopédistes*, thus summarises for us the programme of the *philosophes*:

The *philosophes* of the eighteenth century will combat at once the power, the doctrine and the intolerance of the Church and in this manner: it is in the name of *Nature* and of its legitimate claims that the *philosophes* will wage war against the Catholic asceticism which has founded the theocracy; it is in the name of *Reason* that they will combat the naïve belief in the supernatural; and it is by invoking toleration for all that they will proscribe religious persecution.

There was really nothing in such a programme to alarm our friend Barbier. . . .

The truth of the matter is that the revolutionary character of the *philosophes* has been greatly exaggerated. Villemain, for instance, struck by the "prodigious work of destruction which was in progress in all parts of France," declares that "the philosophical party acted a little after the style of an invading army which enters into a country on the pretext of liberating it and which burns, pillages, sacks, destroys." But, as the preceding chapters show, my belief is that the *philosophes* behaved very differently. . . .

Which of the great *philosophes* had a bourgeois such as Barbier any reason to regard with fear as a disturber of the public peace? Voltaire? Not Voltaire assuredly, for he was in a sense more bourgeois than Barbier himself. In order not to alarm the timid, Voltaire was ready to have resort to all kinds of compromises.

Nor was d'Alembert really more venturesome. We have seen how Barbier called him "imprudent," but that was

only for attacking the Jesuits at a moment when he ought to have been concerned over the safety of the *Encyclopédie*—it was not because he gave vent to dangerous opinions. To his contemporaries d'Alembert gave the impression of being circumspect:

> Among the modern *philosophes* [Collé says in his *Journal*] there are some who do not compromise themselves and they act well and prudently; a man is free to think as he likes, but he must not speak out his thoughts, or at any rate write them, in matters of irreligion and government. M. d'Alembert's way of thinking has been a matter for suspicion, but he has never given himself away either by his actions or by his writings.

"He believed, like Fontenelle," Condorcet says, "that the wise man is not obliged to sacrifice his tranquillity to the hope of being useful, that he owes the truth to men, but with the prudence which is necessary if one does not wish to rouse into active opposition those whom the truth may hurt. . . . He suggested that every man of letters, in order to reconcile the interests of truth with those of his tranquillity, should embody in a kind of literary will and testament all his opinions, quite freely and unrestrainedly expressed."

An egotistical prudence, if you like, but, after all, it is not only the philosopher's tranquillity that is in question; it is the repose of others also. Let us look at d'Alembert's portrait of himself in this connection:

> His principle is that a man of letters who seeks to found a lasting reputation should be careful as to what he writes, careful enough as to what he does, and moderately careful as to what he says. D'Alembert adapts his conduct to this principle; he says many foolish things, writes scarcely any, and does none.

One comes to feel, indeed, that he was altogether too nervous about writing "foolish things"—"*sottises*"; but it was in this way that he avoided disturbing the minds of his bourgeois readers; if we are inclined to condemn him for being too much of a politician for a *philosophe*, we must remember that but for his precautions he would have frightened away many of the people whom he contrived to attract, if not actually to win over.

D'Alembert was fond of insisting that it was the imperative duty of a *philosophe* to be on his guard against any excess

either in form or in substance. It was by dogmatism, he urged, that the *philosophes* evoked most opposition and gave most offence. When one is obliged to wound by the things one says, he declared, one is wrong to wound still more by the tone in which one says them. His published correspondence shows how often he strove to temper the violence of his associates. "The human race," he observes on one occasion, "is more enlightened now because men were prudent enough or fortunate enough to introduce the light little by little. If the sun showed itself in one sudden flash in a cave, its occupants would be conscious only of the injury it did to their eyes."

Fontenelle, he felt, had carried caution too far. It was not right "to keep one's hand closed when one was sure of having the truth in it," so he wrote once to Frederick the Great, "only one should open one's hand carefully, one finger after another, until at last it is wide open and the truth can emerge quite complete. The *philosophes* who open the hand too hastily are madmen; they have their fist cut off and that is all they gain by it."

And in another letter to Frederick he expresses similar ideas:

> The criticism which Your Majesty has passed on *L'Essai sur les Préjugés* makes me even less inclined to read it than the other rhapsodies of the same kind. One may say of all our scribblers against superstition and despotism what Père de la Rue, the Jesuit, said of his colleague, Le Tellier: "He is taking us along at such a rate that he will upset us!" Philosophy ought not to amuse itself by uttering insults against the priests; it should try, as Your Majesty has said, to render religion useful by making it co-operate for the welfare of the peoples.

The *Encyclopédie* itself gave evidence of the same sort of prudence. Barbier could read under the heading "*Philosophe*": "The '*philosophe*' is kneaded, so to speak, with the leaven of order and regularity. . . ." These sentiments are still nourished in the depth of his heart by the religion to which the natural lights of his reason have led him. We must not expect to find in the great work any of the impetuously daring utterances of Diderot. One can see that he is not at his ease in its pages, that he feels he is being watched. That is natural. And then what a diversity of workers there were in this "Babel" and what a contrast in the languages they spoke! M. Ducros, in

that book of his, already cited, distinguishes between the "Encyclopædists" and the "demi-Encyclopædists." There were some who were not even "demi-Encyclopædists." But all were enrolled beneath the banner of philosophy, all went to form the same army, and in those confused ranks were comprised more than one whose very name served to reassure the timid subscriber to the work.

Indeed, it may be questioned whether even within the inner conclaves of the *philosophes*, such as that presided over by Baron d'Holbach, there was much disposition to insist too uncompromisingly and harshly upon the dogmas of the party. Morellet tells us how subjects were discussed at them *pro et contra*, and in a reference to one debate in which Diderot, Roux and the Baron himself spoke dogmatically in favour of absolute atheism, he records the fact that there were present "a good number of theists," including himself, "who defended their tenets vigorously. . . ."

In fact we may take it that "the army of King Voltaire" was a very undisciplined army, and that even its principal leaders, those in the confidence of King Voltaire, were more moderate in their attitude than is generally believed.

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THE bourgeois of the eighteenth century was in time to be won over by these innovators whose philosophic boldness he could not divine; it is easy to see how he was won, as their boldness was so cunningly masked. The legion of the *philosophes* was far indeed from being made up of wreckers and exalted enthusiasts. The exaltation was wanted, of course, if great things were to be done. Had the *philosophes* been, one and all, men of prudence and moderation, they would have achieved less glory. But it was not by the glorious side of their work that they could win over the bourgeois. Fontenelle was nearer to him than Diderot. Fontenelle had amused him, Diderot frightened him. Now there were disciples of Fontenelle still living in Diderot's time and, while some of them did advance gradually from their master's sceptical philosophy to the aggressive philosophy of Diderot, others never traversed that distance. Almost all of them knew how to temper audacity

with guile. To-day we should call them opportunists. Perhaps we might say that the *philosophes* were bourgeois emancipated by their doctrines and the bourgeois *philosophes* held back by prejudices.

Suard[1] was asked once whether Fontenelle had had as intrepid a faith in the progress of reason as the *philosophes* trained in his school. In reply he cited a little conversation which took place once between Fontenelle and Madame Geoffrin[2]: the bourgeois Madame Geoffrin, prudent and circumspect in practice, was yet of a lively and impulsive temperament and prided herself on having vision enough sometimes to divine a thing before reasoning it out. "Is it not the case," she once said to Fontenelle, "that I am often right?" "Yes," the old man replied in his quietly witty way, "but you are right too soon"; and then, pulling out his watch and looking at it, he added: "Your reasoning methods are like this watch of mine—they are fast." Fontenelle, Suard went on to say, used often to say of some of his disciples that if he had not found that their reasoning methods went too far, he would have found that they went too fast. The bourgeois of the eighteenth century held that the reasoning methods of the *philosophes* went too fast and too far, but not to such a degree that it was impossible to follow them; he followed, therefore, at a distance, reassured by the conviction that the vanguard did not constitute the whole of the army and that the rearguard was not too far in advance of him. He continued to follow until 1789, and even after that, down to the day when he understood, to his horror, that his privileges were seriously compromised and that the *rentiers* were in a hole!

"My father," wrote d'Aguesseau, "after having given his blessing to my brother and praying to God for him, added a few words to urge him not to be too much of a '*philosophe*.'" The bourgeois was by temperament a bit of a *philosophe*; he became more of one in the eighteenth century but he never would allow himself to be "too much" of one; his investments forbade.

[1] Jean-Baptiste Suard, *b.* 1733, *d.* 1817.
[2] *B.* 1699, *d.* 1777. Famous for her *salon*.

VIII

THE *PHILOSOPHES* AND THE PEOPLE

After demonstrating how in the eighteenth century all those who were in any way able to keep themselves above "the working classes"—able, that is, to escape the burdens weighing upon them—did not fail to do so, the article in the *Encyclopédie* which deals with *Le Peuple* thus defines the composition of class:

> The mass of *le Peuple* is composed of workmen and labourers. I study with interest their way of living; I find that this workman lives either in a thatched cottage or in some wretched hole vouchsafed to him in our town just because his physical strength is needed. He rises with the sun and, without paying attention to the wealth and comfort all around him, he dons his coat in all weathers, he works our mines and our quarries, he drains our swamps, he cleans our streets, he builds our houses, he makes our furniture; he experiences hunger and is glad to eat what he can get. . . . The labourer, that other man of the people, puts up with the heat and the cold, the pride of the great, the insolence of the rich, the extortion of the farmers, the swindling of the agents, even the ravages of the wild beasts which he dare not drive away from his crops, out of deference to the pleasures of the mighty. He is sober, fair-minded, faithful, religious, without thought of what may come to him from being so. . . . He dies and he leaves the plot of ground to his children to be equally divided between them. . . . If Lucas were not a man of the people he would leave the whole of it to his eldest son. This is a portrait of the men who compose the most numerous and most necessary part of the nation.

This article indicates well enough why the workmen and labourers had reason to welcome the new ideas. They had nothing to lose, everything to gain. It was because they were miserable that they were to supply to the *philosophes* not merely a few disciples, but the support of the great mass of the nation.

There has been a legitimate tendency to discount the extravagant pictures drawn of the misery of the workers in the eighteenth century; and we have been assured that the cities of France were beginning already then to lose something of their mediæval aspect; that important improvements from the standpoint of hygiene and cleanliness were being introduced; that the attention of the Government and of the

municipalities was brought to bear upon the condition of the streets and the question of the public welfare; and we are led to believe that the France of the eighteenth century has been maligned and that the inhabitants of the old French towns were not so badly off as we had been told; we are strengthened in this belief, perhaps, by the writings of foreigners who came to France from countries in a yet more deplorable condition and who were able to write lauditorily about the French capital as the city of elegance and pleasure, of cleanliness and comfort, and we grow convinced that there is no abyss between the Paris of those days and the Paris of our own time and that in those widened streets, cleansed of all filth, freed from mud, lit since 1746 by oil lamps in place of the old lanterns with tallow candles in them, the happy and contented worker had only blessings to bestow upon masters so regardful of his well-being and his happiness. We forget that other foreign visitors, more clear-eyed and more candid, expressed their amazement over the dirt and unwholesomeness of even the most aristocratic quarters of the city: "What dirt!" exclaimed a Neapolitan lady. "Is there a city in the world so dirty as this?" "Paris is little cleaner than a stable," remarked a Russian. "As soon as you go down the steps of a house you have to hold your nose, and were it not for the perfumes which are manufactured here you could not avoid suffocation." Another Russian, balancing good against evil, notes the romantic contrast between "the beautiful things and all these dreadful filthy things," which makes Paris, he says, at once the loveliest and the most hideous city in the world.

And if the capital was in such a condition, we may fairly assume that the other towns were still worse. The butchers, a rich and powerful corporation, retained the detestable habit of throwing their refuse into the gutters. Between banks of ordures and garbage the stinking stream of sewage flowed along normally until the day when, swollen by rain, it broke its bounds and increased to the volume of a threatening flood. The workman had to find his way home through the dirtiest streets of all. We can imagine him at last feeling his way along the dark alley, arriving at his squalid home, and climbing the

slippery, rickety, pestilence-infested staircase to the dreadful attic in which his whole family are lodged in appalling promiscuity, and which looks out on a narrow courtyard even dirtier than the street. Into it are thrown pell-mell all the refuse of the house. No need here even of the warning cry of "Mind the water!"—"*Garde l'eau!*"

We can recall him as he is to be seen in the old prints of the time, ill-dressed, ill-acquainted with the use of socks or stockings, more often barefooted—a convenience when crossing the streets or carrying others across them; the most indispensable item of his costume was his head-wrap, a kind of inexpensive cap or bonnet which was used also by the bourgeois of the poorer kinds. Nothing seemed to matter very much to the workman so long as the head was protected.

What kind of wages did he earn? According to Fleury they had been sinking gradually until they came to an average of 2·20 francs a day towards 1789. We are told of one man, a mason, who received 1·64 francs a day and of others in the baking, bootmaking and building trades receiving only 64, 60 and 42 centimes. According to Barbier this was too much! Many other people said the same, urging that, if the worker were paid less, he would be more sober and more docile, for he would not be able to idle and loiter two or three days a week, but would have to go regularly to his work, instead of thus acquiring bad habits. It was his own fault, they declared, if he was dressed in rags of many hues and if his short and baggy trousers scarcely covered his legs.

The worker himself thought otherwise. If he was in rags it was because he had not enough to eat, and because food came before clothing. Throughout Barbier's journal we keep hearing of the workmen's perpetual revolts against the high price of bread—revolts which never achieved anything but the gallows. In 1786 the weavers of Lyons, we read, demanded in bitter words that, if they were to be treated like beasts of burden, food should at least be provided for them as it was provided for the beasts. . . .

In the best of circumstances wheaten bread—the bread which the bourgeois ate—was, of course, beyond the means

of the workman. He had to put up with *pain noir*—the so-called "black bread," bread made of barley, of rye, of oats, of buckwheat, of millet, with bread sometimes so coarse and hard that he had to break it up with blows from a hammer. When things came to the worst he had to eat a dreadful composition known as "bread without flour." Often he would fall in the street from sheer weakness and lack of nourishment. During the last years of the reign of Louis XV. the cry: "Give us bread! We are dying of hunger!" was to be heard everywhere along the streets. In the year after the accession of Louis XVI., an edict of Turgot's having resulted in an increase in the price of corn, a furious mob of men and women made their way out to Versailles to protest. The protest had effect. The King showed himself in a balcony and there was a decree lowering the price of bread, but the mob, their passions unappeased, on their return to the capital, sacked the bakers' shops. The whole position of things may be said to be summed up in these lines written by Duclos: "In Paris such strong feelings were excited among the populace over the question of bread that blood was spilt and the Government was obliged to execute three of the men most guilty or most ill-fated. This severity did not tranquillise minds because it did not put an end to the want and poverty, and hunger rules more absolutely than do kings." A remark profound in its irony! "The famished belly has no ears"—not even for the observations of well-fed persons who think that wages are too high and that the unfortunate workers expect too much; not even for those who promise admirable laws to men calling out for bread.

When the workman was at the last gasp it was open to him either to become a beggar or, if still young, to follow one of those crimps who swaggered about, with plumes waving above their head and a sword clattering by their side, and a hail-fellow-well-met air about them. Mercier depicts for us some of these merchants in human flesh plying their trade below the Pont-Neuf. The time was past when they were free to flog those whom they had enticed into the *fours*, or military lock-ups, in order to force them to "sign on," but, in order to enrol the riff-raff, they were still allowed to tempt the hungry

by the sight of "turkeys, chickens, quails and larets," which they carried about dangling at the ends of long poles. "The poor dupes," says Mercier, "who had never in their lives enjoyed a good meal, were tempted to make one and bartered their freedom for one happy day." Thirty *livres* apiece was the price of a fighting man below the Pont Neuf! Sometimes the crimp would lure his victim into a kind of shop decorated with ensigns and attractive inscriptions. One of them, with a taste for literature, wrote up the words: "*Le premier qui fut roi fut un soldat heureux.*"[1] Sometimes, when the recruit was the son of a workman with a little money, the parents would intervene and buy back for one hundred crowns a man who had been bought for ten—a welcome bonus to the colonel and the recruiting officers! In most cases, however, the man's freedom was gone for good.

One other alternative, indeed, there was for the worker at his wits' ends. When, with the help of his fellows who read and reflected, he came to realise clearly the source of his woes, he saw that it depended upon his own class to improve the condition of things for themselves. Accordingly he determined to strive in this direction. It is a mistake to believe that the industrial revolution dates only from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The great scientific discoveries, of course, accomplished within a few years more than was accomplished by the whole of the eighteenth century, but the origins of our State manufactories, and of our great manufactories in general, go back to the sixteenth century; Colbert, who carried on the economic policy of Henri IV., was not *le père de la grande industrie en France*: he was merely its ardent propagator. The mediæval conception of labour ended with the reign of Henry IV. Between the linen manufacturing at Saint-Sever, founded in 1606, with its three hundred and fifty looms, and the old-fashioned *atelier* wherein the master-workman toiled with a few comrades and apprentices, there lay a gulf: the Middle Ages end really with the introduction of such manufactories. The past did not disappear all at once, of course; things underwent a gradual evolution during the seventeenth

[1] "The first man to become king was a successful soldier."

and eighteenth centuries and down to the date of the invention of the steam-engine. And this evolution brought with it the evils which were inevitable: times of crisis induced by intensified production or by new mechanical devices, by the rise and fall of markets, by stoppages of work and the need and want resulting from them. The distance increased steadily between the employers and the employed; the workman could no longer hope to become the head of the business, but the head of the business could not be sure that one day he might not have to become a worker; the numbers of men working together increased and with their numbers their consciousness of their combined strength. Barbier had good reason to fear the results of this: therein lay the real danger to the established order of things.

Slowly and secretly combinations of workmen came into existence to stand up against the combination of the employers, who had leagued themselves together to refuse employment to a workman discharged by one of their number and who had come to an agreement regarding the restriction of the rights of the working classes in such a way as to enforce their choice between submitting to regulations which had grown out-of-date or else dying of hunger. Little by little the nature of the peril made itself more and more clear. Secret associations, members of which from any corner of France could recognise each other by certain symbolical signs and passwords, began to disquiet the employers and also the Ministers. Very numerous decrees were directed against these new bodies, these proletarian Freemasonries, between which and the less formidable Freemasonries of the bourgeois Mercier institutes a comparison. Throughout the eighteenth century strike succeeded strike unceasingly. The histories of Socialism tell us of the strikes of the weavers at Lyons, in 1744, 1752 and 1779, and of the general strike of the weavers in 1786, which was put down by the army wherein young Lieutenant Bonaparte saw service; of the strikes of the clothiers' workers at Rouen in 1736, 1744, 1772; of those at Amiens in 1772; of the men in the Dauphiny paper-works in 1724; of the Saint-Étienne blacksmiths in 1752, etc., etc. In Paris

the strikes often ended in bloodshed. On the eve of the meeting of the States General the tailors, bootmakers and printers rose in revolt and were put down amid scenes of carnage: shootings, hangings, imprisonments, years of servitude in the galleys—such were the normal sequels to these strikes. . . .

If now we ask what was done to dissuade the workers from becoming disturbers of the peace and to induce them to become faithful champions of law and order, we shall find that it was not enough to punish some of them and to leave the others a prey to vexations, want and misfortune. A pamphlet of 1789 entitled, *Le Cahier des Pauvres*,[1] demands that wages "be no longer so coldly calculated in accordance with the murderous maxims of an unbridled luxury or of an insatiable greed," and we find the master workers of Lyons protesting vehemently against the merchants who are to be seen "forcing the worker to accept half wages and forcing fathers of families, together with their wives and children, to work seventeen or eighteen hours a day." To which the manufacturers' reply was that if the workmen were not kept occupied all the time they would employ their free hours to form a league, and that the actual method of dealing with the workers was calculated to make them "more industrious, better regulated in their habits and more submissive." More submissive? That was not the view of the author of another pamphlet, entitled *Quatre Cris d'un Patriote*: "We must safeguard the owners," he cried, "from the terrible and not far distant uprising of twenty-five million indignant men." The sequel proved that he was right. . . .

Before speaking of the peasant of the eighteenth century, I may repeat with even more aptness what I began by saying with reference to the workman of the town: I believe that on the pretext of correcting the extravagant language of certain historians our contemporary writers have themselves strayed from the historic truth. We are asked, it is true, to make a distinction. The fact that the worker in the fields between 1690 and 1750 was living under more wretched conditions than at any other period in our history has had to be admitted. The

[1] "The Memorial of the Poor."

powerful picture left us by La Bruyère is even an understatement of the facts. . . . Madame Roland, nearly a century later, declared that the French peasants were in a condition a hundred times more wretched than the Caribbeans, the Greenlanders and the Esquimaux. In 1739 we have it from d'Argenson that "in days of absolute peace and with every appearance of a quite good, if not abundant, harvest, men were eating grass and dying like flies from poverty." [1]

"It is certain," declares d'Argenson, "that a greater number of Frenchmen have died of want during the last two years than have been killed in all the wars since Louis XIV." The misery increased during the years which followed. In 1750 d'Argenson was assured that one-third of the inhabitants of Touraine succumbed, and he describes the hopeless despair which prevailed in that region. The young men and women in the parish in which the Marquis stayed were in no mood to wed, he learned, "because it was not worth while bringing into the world other souls as wretched as themselves." It was in vain that he offered to help them with money. He met always with the same answer—"as though they had come to an agreement on the subject." Desertions from the army multiplied, mutinies were frequent, and the efforts to cope with these things failed: hunger was stronger than all else. . . .

In the fifth book of *Origines de la France Contemporaine* (*L'Ancien Régime*) Taine presents a convincing picture of the state of things which prevailed—a picture constructed with the help of authentic documents, Government correspondence of the thirty years preceding the Revolution, official reports of the provincial Assemblies, extracts from the National Archives, letters written by the Intendants, memoirs, diaries, etc., etc. To this great work I would refer the reader for details. Here it will suffice to point out that even after 1750, when the value of property in France increased so greatly, there was

[1] The black bread eaten by the peasant was no better than that of the workman, and it was harder; in the towns, ovens were heated at least once a month; in the country, much less frequently. The hillsmen of the Dauphiny baked in October for the whole of the winter, and it was said that they could break their bread only with an axe.

no diminution in the number of bread riots. In Normandy alone the risings of 1752, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767 and 1768 have become famous. There was not a year without similar risings both in the provinces and in Paris. It made no difference to the poor that the landed proprietors were now so much better off. In this second half of the eighteenth century the regular pay of an agricultural labourer was 1 franc 64 centimes a day, but there were very many who earned less, as little as 63 centimes, or 51, or even 28. Those were esteemed happy often who had any work to do at all. Unemployment was regular in the dead season and very frequent during the rest of the year. As regards food, there was no question of meat for him except on some great occasion. The cost of meat had gone up steadily. Nor had he wine. "Out of a thousand inhabitants of my village," wrote a *curé* in Picardy, "I am convinced that nine hundred and fifty have never tasted wine." Potatoes as a food were not to be in use in France until the end of the century. Peas, beans, lentils, etc., were more expensive than they are nowadays, so were butter and milk, while the price of salt was exorbitant. The peasant's dwelling was a cabin of clay, without any windows. In this poor hovel the luckless wight, weak and worn and puny, made his home. Attired in rags even in the depth of winter, he sometimes went stockingless and bootless, wearing, instead, sandals or slippers made of string or strips of leather.

We must give no credence to those idyllic pictures which were painted by men to whose interest it was to make believe that all was well or who were determined in advance to produce designs worthy of Virgil or of Florian. Everyone has seen the pictures to which I allude—those representations of fêtes and rejoicings, of dances joined in to the music of the pipes or of the hautboy or of the violin. "The Frenchman," wrote the author of the *Anti-Financier*, "abandons himself to joy even in the depth of his want. . . ."

I am, of course, familiar with the statements of those visitors to France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who describe it as a land of plenty. In 1658, for instance, Mademoiselle de Montpensier declared that the peasants of

the Dombe ate meat four times a day. Well, I do not believe it! In 1739 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu declared: "The villages are inhabited by vigorous, chubby-cheeked peasants, dressed in good clothes and wearing clean linen. You cannot imagine what an air of abundance and of contentment prevails throughout the kingdom." And yet this was the very year in which the miseries of the whole of France are laid bare to us by d'Argenson—miseries worse perhaps than at any other period of the century! But, as d'Argenson himself found, there are always some people to take the rosy-coloured view of things. "And yet," he muses, "M. Orry boasts of the well-being in which the kingdom now stands, the regularity of payments, the abundance of money in Paris and which, according to him, guarantees the Royal credit." Six years later, when d'Argenson is observing with pity the poor people whom he sees "dying of want," he hears with his own ears a man of local note, with his own house in the neighbourhood, declare that the parish ought to be more heavily taxed this year inasmuch as he had noticed that the peasants were looking fatter and had noticed the plucked feathers of fowl on door-steps; and that it was clear therefore that they were having good food and thriving. There are those who discount the trustworthiness of the *cahiers* of the States General. The peasant, they urge, was invited to set forth his grievances and often he was at pains to make out an effective case. But in a certain number of these we come upon pleas so heart-breaking that one is left in no doubt as to their sincerity. "I don't know what to ask," wrote a peasant of Roquencourt. "The poverty is so great that one can get no bread." A collector declares himself "much troubled, inasmuch as, having gone to collect the rates, half the households make answer that they have no bread, shedding tears, wishing themselves out of the world." Similar evidence is forthcoming from many other sources, among them such well-authenticated works as the *Mémoires des Intendants sur l'État des Généralités*,[1] etc. The Intendant of Orleans, for instance, tells how "in Sologne some poor widows have burnt their wooden beds, others their

[1] *Généralités* = the administrative divisions under the Intendants.

fruit-trees," in order to protect themselves from the cold; and he adds: "*There is no exaggeration in this picture*; the cry of want cannot be reproduced; the wretchedness of the country has to be seen from close at hand to be realised."

I do not think that the condition of the French peasants was made less unhappy in the eighteenth century than it had been by the increase in the number of small proprietors. We have abandoned to-day the illusory hopes which were placed by our fathers in the growth of peasant proprietorship. The farmer who has a plot of land too small to furnish him with a livelihood and who has to do work for his neighbours is scarcely better off than the ordinary labourer. The chief difference between them is that he has his anxieties and debts. Money has to be invested in a field before it can be made fertile: this becomes more and more true in proportion to the degree in which agriculture is conducted upon the new industrial lines. The farmer's share in the profits has been decreasing ever since the sixteenth century.

The indisputable proof of the want and misery which prevailed in the country as in the town was the formidable increase in the number of beggars. . . . In spite of the severest measures taken against them, in spite of charitable efforts of all descriptions, official and private, their numbers multiplied unceasingly. The evil was too great a one to be coped with by empirical means. In Paris, in 1791, out of 650,000 inhabitants, 118,784 were classed as being "in want"; at Lyons, in 1789, 30,000 workmen were living on alms. Mercier, according to whom the French populace generally was stunted and sickly-looking, tells us how he used to see the poor waiting in crowds outside the doors of monasteries, each with a bowl in which the monks would pour some soup, and how the poor wretches would lap it up like starving dogs. Naturally there would be among them many dangerous characters, incipient marauders and assassins. We hear of how they formed themselves sometimes into robber bands, like the bandits of the Middle Ages, and even tortured victims to make them reveal where their money was concealed. The prisons at times were full to overflowing with these desperate criminals, and their "board and

lodging" at the King's expense was no small matter: the renewal of their straw and water and bread and "salted fat" —"*graisse salée*"—cost the King five *sous* a day each.

But imprisonment, like all other methods, failed to stem the growing tide. Voltaire, in 1769, had observed that the measures then introduced were fruitless: "Mendicity has been forbidden in France," he wrote; "the *maréchaussées* [mounted police] have severe orders in regard to this; yet I see a crowd of beggars before my eyes levying their toll upon town and country and parading their idleness as though it were a virtue. Is it in order to benefit them that they oppress the genuine poor?"

There was no end to the complaints of this kind. At last no one took seriously either the edicts or the steps which followed, and, after the expulsion of the beggars which took place in 1764, a Monsieur Nogaret made a hit with a brochure entitled *Lettre d'un Mendiant au Public.* The *Parlement* of Brittany complained that "the towns were so populated by beggars that it seemed as though all the plans made to abolish mendicity had merely succeeded in increasing it." The born beggar—*le mendiant de race*, to use Mercier's phrase—is unwilling to follow any other calling, and, were he willing, the state of society in those days would not have enabled him to do so. In that very Artois in which Walpole found people so well-off, we learn that "out of 130 houses there were 60 on the roll of the poor." Where nearly half the population had to subsist on charity, what system could serve to get rid of professional beggars? When the time should come of riots and revolts these starving creatures would necessarily be the first to take a hand in them. Used to affrays with the police and with soldiers on guard, and reckless of their lives, they would be quick to rush upon their foes like ravenous dogs and wolves, to kill or be killed. The fault of all this lay with the *ancien régime.* "All the institutions," says Taine, "seem to combine to tolerate or to multiply the agents of disorder and to prepare, outside the pale of society, the men of action who shall break it down."

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FORTUNATELY for the preservation of the basis of French society, the people were fundamentally religious. Perhaps the established order of things would have lasted longer if the unfortunate wretches had remained convinced that resignation to the ordeals inflicted by Providence was the best means of testifying their faith. The *philosophes*, by demonstrating that those hardships came from the imperfections of the administrative and political system, from its iniquities and abuses, opened the eyes of these poor people. It would have been impossible to detach them from their beliefs and besides we must believe the protestation of the *philosophes* that to do so was not their wish. It would have been impossible because religion occupied too large a place in civil life: association in religious matters was the soul of the life of the French town.

The French eighteenth-century city revealed beyond the possibility of doubt its Catholic character. Their great town halls had each its chapel, like that of Lyons, and often its regular chaplain. Everywhere, you saw the crucifix. The financial archives show us what strong links bound together the interests of the town and of the Church: we see the sums paid for the supply of wax candles and of ecclesiastical ornaments, for the employment of preachers, for the uniforms of the *Suisses*,[1] for the construction of organs and for the salaries of the choir, etc., etc. The church clock is maintained also at the expense of the inhabitants. There is a regular payment for the saying of a certain number of masses in the year. In 1789, at Paris, there was a charge of 100 *livres* for the candelabrum of Notre Dame in execution of a vow and one of twenty-five *livres* as payment to the district officer, whose task it was to look after the chains for the procession of 15th August. Public meetings were held in the various parishes or districts when the municipal elections were in progress and often in the church itself, in the rector's presence. The aldermen and councillors took a hand in the administration of the Church, supervised the execution of the ecclesiastical laws, enforced the observation of Sundays and holidays, and of Lent, obtained

[1] Uniformed attendants in the churches.

dispensations from fasting, etc., etc. They took part officially in the church ceremonies. At Lyons, they attended Mass every year at Fourvière and offered up to the Blessed Virgin a gold piece and seven pounds of white wax. The whole world of France rested on a religious basis. In every parish the population was counted by the number of communicants—that is, by the number of those who had reached the age for making their First Communion.

Wherever he looked, the Frenchman had his religion recalled to his mind. The streets wore a Catholic aspect. There were in the Paris of 1789 forty-six parish churches, twenty other churches and ninety-two chapels. At every street corner almost there was a statue of the Virign and Child, made of wood or stone. Countless statues of saints decorated the façades of the houses. So it was in the country towns likewise. At Blois, every doorway was surmounted by a statue of the Virgin, in fulfilment of a vow registered at the time of the great pestilence in 1631. In front of the statues of the Virgin and of the saints hymns and litanies were continually being sung and candles were kept alight. And then the almost unbroken series of processions throughout the year! That of Corpus Christi was the most important of all, when the streets were swept and sanded and strewn with flowers and green leaves. All the houses had to be decorated, under penalty of a fine; and what competition there was among the chief citizens as to who should unfurl the richest tapestries, however profane the subject of them might be! And so also with the processions in honour of St Eustache and St Sulpice and St Geneviève.

In all these religious ceremonies the public took part, either as actors or as spectators. We must not forget that all the guilds of arts and crafts had their places in the processions. Every description of union or society played its part, and what fallacies and contentions there were between bootmakers and cobblers, between the cooks and the innkeepers, between the bakers and the confectioners! But the whole community was brought into close touch by these functions—there was no holding aloof from them. You had to belong to a group of some kind. In the bourgeois class there was even a group

specially of those who had no occupation. The artisans entered into their guilds in their capacity as either members or apprentices. Once enrolled, they were bound together by bonds at once professional and religious. Almost always the guild formed a religious confraternity; always it had its patron saints and its festival days in their honour, beginning with religious services and ending with banquets and dances. In this way the eighteenth-century townsman lived his entire life in an atmosphere of Catholicism, and it is not surprising that he retained his Christian sentiments.

As may be easily imagined, the country folk were more Catholic still, and at the same time more regular in their religious practices. To a much greater degree than the townspeople they *lived* in the church. The church still remained for them, as in mediæval days, *la maison commune*.[1] The peasant resorted to it with his wife and children. In it there would be gossiping and joking and bargaining. In it the peasant, quite simply, felt himself at home. The communal meetings took place in it, the mayors and other local officials were chosen in it, even auctions were held in it. And, although this was a thing which the bishops sought to stop, announcements were made in it regarding all public events at home and abroad. In 1775 the King addressed a circular communication to the priests with regard to the high price of corn, and the pulpit accordingly was lent to the publication of the counsels of the economists by whom he had been advised. Turgot, who also endeavoured to make the priests his collaborators, requested them to render him similar services.

They were able to render yet other services to the philosophic Minister, who had occasion to keep up a very active correspondence with them. The village priest was apt to be even more popular than the *curé* of the town. There were priests, of course, who were open to criticism. But many of them remembered always that they themselves were sons of the people. Often they took sides with the people openly and bravely—sometimes in a manner sufficiently remarkable. "My children," a *curé* is reported once to have called out to

[1] *I.e.* a place open to all.

his half-famished congregation in church, "my children, I am going to organise a shoot," and he named the day and the hour. "I exhort you to be there!" he continued. There was a priest not calculated to be in favour with the Lord of the Manor!

And now to what extent could the populace of France in those days have been called educated? If they were as ignorant as Taine would have us believe, the influence of the *philosophes* upon the mass of the nation must have amounted to almost nothing. I feel, however, that Taine deduced too much from facts which in themselves are indisputable. It is the fact that the masses believed that Louis XV. had their children stolen from them so that he might indulge in baths of blood, but this is no proof that the people was absolutely illiterate. In this twentieth century of ours, similarly monstrous charges are brought against the Jews. Under Louis XV. people became convinced that the alleged scarcity of food was factitious and that the men of the Court were throwing flour into the Seine; and Arthur Young was taken for a dynamitard or a conspirator; these, also, are not proofs of absolute ignorance. In 1789 the inhabitants of Provence were convinced that the first two orders of the State were going to bear all the expenses of Government and that the people would be exempt from taxation; elsewhere it was believed that it was the King who wanted the Revolution; but all this is quite intelligible to anyone who really knows the populace as it has always been, and in particular that of the eighteenth century. The *philosophes* themselves had always assured the masses that they ought to be exempt from taxation so long as they had only the necessaries of life, and they had propagated the idea that the Monarchy would accomplish the reforms from which the new order would spring. Where Taine sees only a proof of the grossest ignorance on the part of the people, perhaps we ought really to recognise traces of the work achieved by the reformers. Facts of this kind do not convince me that the townsfolk of the middle of the eighteenth century were as ignorant and stupid as those of the Middle Ages.

On the other hand I cannot agree with M. Babeau when

he says that from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards "primary education was within the reach of all, no less than in our own day," in the various quarters of Paris. It may very well be that under Louis XVI. there were three hundred and seventeen small schools, and ninety-five charity schools, besides others; but the point is, how were they organised and what was the attendance; I do not dispute that there were primary schools in the towns and that under Louis XV. there were interesting efforts at popular education: it was the period of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle's greatest activity, when the "Christian Brothers" were getting the best of it in their struggles with the magistrates and municipalities on the one hand, and the masters of lay schools and writing masters on the other.

In 1789 the elementary teachers drawn from the Christian Brotherhoods were nearly everywhere. Free education was open to children of the poor; but how many could take advantage of it?

We are reminded that the magistrates more than once decreed compulsory education for the boys of the working classes. But how could the *ancien régime* have overcome the difficulties which still confront modern society in spite of its heroic efforts to ensure universal education, efforts compared with which those of the eighteenth century were almost insignificant? At a time when poverty, which still keeps children out of school, was incomparably more terrible than to-day, when the supply of teachers was very limited, and educational methods defective, when the number of schools was much smaller, how could the education of the poorer classes have been widespread? Rural districts seem to have been less privileged, as boys' schools were seldom free, but that did not prevent frequent complaints of the harm done to the peasant by free education. It was the subject of a long and famous debate, and many writers were to echo the complaint that there were too many free schools, that they were training too many priests and officials, those "celibates and office hunters who swarm in France."

Hence M. Babeau's opinion, as expressed in his book,

Le Village sous l'Ancien Régime, that this evidence of too many free schools " proves in a striking way how widespread education was, and how well within the reach of all, under the *ancien régime*." That is to go rather far. There is a mass of evidence to the contrary. A *cahier* of 1789, from which M. Babeau himself quotes an extract, declares that " the greater part of the inhabitants cannot read; they therefore understand none of the prayers in church, they find the service wearisome and converse as if they were in the street." In Toulouse forty parishes out of fifty had no school; in Gascony, according to the report of the provincial assembly of Auch, " most of the villages have no teacher or priest." In spite of this evidence of lack of schools a *cahier* of 1789 demands " the cutting down of the number of free schools and of scholarships to colleges, that are depopulating the fields and workshops, which are much more useful than the crowd of scribblers, priests and clerks, who, having nothing but their pen, wander about in poverty and proud ignorance "! Whether it was a question of town or country, we can see clearly that what they called too many, we call too few. The optimistic view of the past is based on a mistake; it is impossible to admit that the France of to-day is behind the eighteenth century in education. The truth is that, whether in town or country, the mass of the people was much less ignorant than they were formerly supposed to have been and much more illiterate than is asserted to-day.

One is almost afraid to give figures, such disputes have arisen over those given in various monographs. In the archives of the Alpes Briançonnaises, a magistrate is said to have found that in the most ancient times the number of signatures to the proceedings of the town council was equal to that of the numbers present. Perhaps it would be a poor joke to suggest that one man signed for many! But in any case there is little difference between an illiterate and a man who can write no more than his name. We have more exact data, however. In the Department of the Nord, at the end of the eighteenth century, the number of bridegrooms and brides respectively who could sign their names at their marriage was 53·97 per cent. and 36·29 per cent.; in Franche-Comté, 78·85 and 29·12

per cent.; in Béarn, 71·91 and 9·19 per cent.; in Angoumois, 26·65 and 9·02 per cent.; in Nivernais, 13·65 and 5·94 per cent. We can deduce from these figures that the number of people who can read and write has steadily increased. And that is the opinion of F. Brunetière in his article on *La Formation de l'Idée de Progrès*.

Enlightenment is more widespread as we approach modern times. " Even some rays, or, if you prefer it, some particles of light, penetrate to the lowest strata of society, in spite of its rigid caste system, and at the very bottom a new curiosity is aroused." The writer narrates the story of a young girl who was obliged to sleep in a tavern at Saint-Pierre-sur-Dive about the year 1710, and who, through the partition, overheard soldiers and carters disputing about the roundness of the earth and about the Antipodes. He recalls the story of Boileau surprising a little lackey devouring *Le Diable Boîteux* which had just come out (1707) and Dubois saying that at that time " even a *petit bourgeois* would not employ a lackey or even a cook who could not read and write." Brunetière, on his guard against the drawing of excessive conclusions from these trifling facts, sums the matter up as follows, quite fairly as it seems to me:

> A new public is slowly being formed, less refined but more numerous and more varied than the old. In a few more years, if the same causes continue to act, demand will create supply, and will call forth from below writers well fitted to satisfy it; and the Diderots and the Jeans-Jacques—not to mention lesser lights, who will have their share—will introduce the ferment of democracy into literature to give it fresh life.

Democracy was to furnish readers and admirers to the Diderots and Rousseaus:

> Everyone reads in Paris [writes the German, Storch, at the end of the century]. Everyone has a book in their pocket, especially the women. People read dining, walking, at the theatre in the intervals, in the café, in the bath. In the shops women, children, workmen, apprentices read; on Sunday people sit in their doorways reading, lackeys read behind the carriages, coachmen read on the box, and soldiers read on guard.

Caraccioli, in his *Lettres Récréatives*, 1768, notes with disapproval: " Everyone one meets reads incessantly, so much

the worse for them!" And he complains of the large number of pamphlets "that have taken the place of the great works which immortalise a nation."

Le Diable Boîteux has long been out of fashion, popular attention has turned to more serious things, unceasingly excited by thousands of newspapers and pamphlets pouring in from Paris, London, Geneva and Amsterdam. Chronicles and memoirs are full of this passion for reading.

Restif de la Bretonne declares in his *Inscriptions* in November 1785: "For some time past the workmen of the capital have become unmanageable because they have read in our books a truth too heady for them: that the workman is a man to be valued. Since they have read this truth they seem to have undertaken to make it a lie, so much do they neglect their work."

There would have been no good in telling Restif that the *philosophes* were not responsible for the revolutionary movement which he foresaw in 1780 when he cried: "A terrible revolution will come when the worker realises his importance." Seven years later he repeated his warning: "Listen to a man of the people who sees, who lives with the people and knows its most secret thoughts? The ferment exists and is growing . . . the workman has become a despot and, by a reversal of the general order of things, which presages a terrible revolution, power has passed into the hands of those whose interest it is to destroy it." In his opinion the workman had become a despot because he had read in the writing of the *philosophes* truths "too heady" for him.

The constant preoccupation of the *philosophes* with the improvement of the lot of the workmen, the increase of their comforts, the raising of their wages—all this is bound in the end to lead to a cessation of work. The workers are like a stomach overloaded and made torpid!

Mercier in his *Tableau de Paris* gives equally valuable evidence: "We need many books, because there are many readers. They are needed for all classes, for all classes have an equal right to knowledge." Many readers mean many books, La Montagne de St Geneviève [1] is inhabited by booksellers

[1] The hill on which stands the Pantheon, formerly the Church of St Geneviève.

and book-traders, etc. The mania for writing supports so many citizens. The lesser people hire pamphlets at "the booklender's," so called—"*Le Loueur de Livres*." There may be seen books "knocked about, dirty and torn, proving by their condition that they are the best of all." There the critic may learn "which are the brochures most in demand, which are taken away, and to which people return again and again . . . those that are in demand in all quarters of the city, in the attics as well as in the *salons*." Young girls slip in on the sly, their mothers have forbidden them to read; they ask for *La Nouvelle Héloise*; the shop-boy smiles, they pay and run away to shut themselves in to read."

The only good books to be read in France are forbidden by the censor, M. le Camus de Neuville, but all in vain; they pass from hand to hand. As the Government cannot cut off the hands and tongues of the *philosophes* it sets up an inquisition on the roads and frontiers; its armies and functionaries try everywhere to intercept the onward march of truth, but such efforts are all in vain. Inspection is evaded by carrying French money to the printing presses of Holland, Germany and Geneva.

It is no good "throwing the book-pedlars into the Bastille, for those brave fellows serve liberty and gain their daily bread by circulating the rarest products of genius. Moreover the police, whose task it is to confiscate these pamphlets, carry on the trade wholesale, and earn more than any number of book-pedlars." Thus the circulation of books and pamphlets swells continually. Arthur Young declared he had seen nothing like it even in London.

A similar movement, though less intense, went on in the provinces. De Tocqueville speaks of reports to the ministries stating that printing presses, important in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had disappeared, or were doing nothing. "The movement of thought came only from the Centre"—but thence it spread over the whole of France. There was constant exchange between Paris and the provinces. At the beginning of the Revolution Arthur Young heard the same thing everywhere: "We are only a provincial town, we must

see what Paris does." For many years the citizens had been in the habit of meeting to hear and discuss news from the capital, and Mercier begins his chapter on "The Influence of the Capital on the Provinces" with these words: "In politics it is too great for it to be possible to describe its effects."

And even if it could be shown that the number of those who could not read were a hundred times greater than the number who could read, it would be a mistake to deduce that the *philosophes* had no effect on the people. The writings of the *philosophes* had invaded and captured the theatre. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and d'Holbach educated the playgoing public. Dramatists did not attempt to hide their teachings, they set them forth boldly, certain of applause. Life at that time, moreover, was carried on more in groups than nowadays; ideas were spread much more readily because social intercourse was more frequent and intimate. Since the opening of the modern era associations of all sorts have never been so many or so close. Nowadays members of committees and philanthropic societies are much more isolated than in those days were members of a religious confraternity or of a trade community. A new idea quickly forged its way ahead, and conversions were perhaps as unexpected and decisive as those made by our modern newspapers. Our ancestors lived in the street much more than we do. In the village the public square deserved its title more than it does to-day; in town and village dances and demonstrations, whether religious or secular, drew the people out of doors. Discussions went on in the open street and argument was carried on as men walked up and down, forgetting the distance in the heat of their argument.

In Paris the whole crowd of the out-at-elbows hawkers, shoeblacks, messengers and such-like sat on the steps of the Pont Neuf and held regular meetings all the year round. The street venders displayed their goods in the open air, and popular prints have preserved for us the picturesque types and street cries of the street life of the day. Life overflowed in the eighteenth-century street, and a funny story or daring idea flew

from mouth to mouth. The coachman reading on his box had a crowd of listeners at once, ready to take up the idea or the joke that he passed on to them.

Mercier describes the public reading of the *gazette*, the auditors on a bench in the Tuileries or Palais Royal, or on the quay; it has been censored, but what difference does that make? "A witty comment knocks over at a blow the whole edifice of these official gazettes, the joke passes from one to another in café and theatre, everyone laughs and public opinion knows what to think on the subject." In the streets, in front of the cafés, whenever the *gazette* is read, groups gather to hear the news, and where a speaker puts forward the official view, "backed by the police," as Mercier says, he is seldom contradicted, but he is contradicted *occasionally*, and that is enough. "These groups argue in the gutter, with the carriages clattering over the pavement and ready to run over this new modern Demosthenes, or anyone else, at any moment, quite indiscriminately. Mercier adds: "The most astounding thing is to see these poor tattered devils as excited and absorbed in the news as if it were bread. They forget their supper and their family in their extraordinary mania for drinking in and retailing rubbish out of door."

Mercier comments ill-humouredly on the "grotesque faces," the "absurd notions," because the crowd goes even further than the gazettes in its anti-English prejudices, whereas Mercier is decidedly pro-English. But on other occasions he must have heard more interesting opinions: "the three men who in my day were most talked about in Paris were the King of Prussia, Voltaire, and J.-J. Rousseau." In 1788 Mallet du Pan heard a man speaking in the streets and discussing a book amidst enthusiastic applause; on this occasion the orator certainly did not represent the police: the book was the *Contrat Social* and the speaker Marat.

Everyone felt something impending; the tatterdemalion who could not read, even if he did not care for discussion, was drawn along by the stream of public opinion which swelled as the century advanced, and it was the *philosophes* who created the stream, directed it, and made it irresistible.

If in our days there are workmen who are totally illiterate, and who do not even attend public meetings, and if they declare themselves supporters of a Socialism they do not understand, which of us will dare to assert that Socialist writers and speakers have not had the deepest influence on them? Of course these poor fellows have not read Proudhon or Karl Marx, but they have to bear a burden which they find crushing, and they feel that it depends on their own efforts to alleviate it. They discovered the first point for themselves unaided; the second idea has come to them unconsciously from those whom they never heard speak, and whose writings they have never read. I should say the same of the people in the eighteenth century. Even if three-fourths of those poor wretches were incapable of reading any of the writings which emanated from the *philosophes*, and with which the capital was swarming, even if they knew nothing of the contents of those writings through their better-equipped comrades, even if they had never set foot inside a theatre, they all lived in an atmosphere impregnated with the ideas of the reformers, and they breathed it in, in spite of themselves. But this hypothesis does not quite fit the facts; as a matter of fact there was a growing reading public in the democracy, getting poorer in quality but richer in quantity; and it was this public which in one form or another adapted the doctrines of the Encyclopædists to the beliefs of future society, and popularised them to suit Brunetière's "lowest classes," who were thus enabled to get their share of light.

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How were the *philosophes* able to attract this great new public, and what was their true feeling towards the people whom they were to educate? It has become usual to say that their attitude to humanity in general had in it more of reason than of feeling and that it embodies the "cold charity called altruism," as Anatole France puts it. D'Alembert thought Diderot too lofty and Rousseau too passionate. Marmontel's judgment in his *Éloge de d'Alembert* might fairly be applied to most of them:

He had neither in his manner nor in his writings that exaggerated and fictitious warmth which is true neither to thought nor feeling; but who was more highly gifted with that degree of sensibility which is the essence of goodness, because it is just, enlightened and active—the sensibility of the wise man, the warmth of a good heart? Such is a wise man's sensibility, tempered by reason.

There is however no need to exaggerate; all the reformers had moments when their hearts were touched, Voltaire as much as others, and the following passage from Marmontel might be applied to the *philosophes* in general:

When he came across a crying abuse or odious vice he was not cold and insensible; he had no kindly indulgence for evil; this man, who had so little bitterness in him that his friends smiled at his outbursts as at those of a child, blazed with indignation when he saw the innocent and weak crushed by the injustice of the strong. The claims of humanity were supreme with him.

There lies the secret of the influence of the *philosophes*. The *Encyclopédie* has the following definition of philanthropy:

Philanthropy is a gentle virtue, patient and disinterested, which endures evil without approving it. Knowing its own weakness, it pities those of others.

This article was written by Jaucourt. It is astonishing that Diderot let it pass. This Stoic and negative philanthropy would have been useless had not they too had their faith.

Of course Voltaire will be cited to the contrary, in particular his famous letter to Tabareau (3rd February 1769):

France would be a delightful country if it were not for its taxes and its pedants. As to the people, they will always be stupid and brutal. They are cattle and what is wanted for them is a yoke, a goad, and fodder.

An unlucky dictum, as Sainte-Beuve says, and especially if detached from everything else written by Voltaire, and used as evidence of his hating and castigating the people. Sainte-Beuve is not the man to hang a man for one phrase. He merely shows that Voltaire was not a democrat, and that it is absurd to class him with Jean-Jacques, and that he despised majorities; he proceeds to point out that when thus expressing himself Voltaire "forgot, or did not foresee, a gradual softening of manners, a continuous if imperceptible progress to which he himself was to contribute." That hits the mark exactly,

Voltaire must not be condemned for an occasional petulance; by comparing such passages with others we may discover behind the petulance the real thought underlying it. Listen to him again:

> The populace, always extreme, always brutal when the reins are slack . . . the populace is the same almost everywhere. Religion can still sharpen swords. In every nation there is a class which is completely out of touch with ordinary decent folk, which does not belong to the time in which it lives, which is untouched by progress and reason, and which is dominated by brutal fanaticism, just as certain disgusting maladies only attack the lowest of the populace. . . . The populace often rules those who should rule it and educate it. In revolutions it dictates the laws, its foolish superstitions are imposed on wiser people, it forces Ministers in hard times to take dangerous measures, and often influences the decisions of subordinate officials.

This is no calumny on the populace of the eighteenth century: Voltaire's verdict is less harsh than Taine's. But was it possible in the eighteenth century to separate clearly the populace from the people?

The administration made no such distinction. M. Babeau tells us that a "sub-delegate" complained in 1733 that "the populace, composed of more than four hundred wine growers, handicraftsmen and artisans," had kept in office the syndics of Bar-sur-Aube in spite of royal edicts and the orders of the Intendant. The term is used synonymously with "people." The jurisconsult Loyseau writes that the lower classes have no right to be called "bourgeois"; was, then, everyone of the populace who was not bourgeois? What proportion inscribed in the communal list as poor were "people" and what "populace"? It is difficult to decide. Voltaire, in his discussion with Damilaville as to whether the people could or should be educated, wrote (19th March—1st April 1766):

> The King of Prussia reckons only one *philosophe* to every thousand men; but he excepts England. On this reckoning there are only two thousand wise men in France, but in ten years those two thousand can produce forty thousand, and that is about as many as are needed, for it is right for the people to be guided and not instructed: it does not deserve instruction.

Here we have one of the *philosophe's* petulant outbursts, in his annoyance with the population in general; again we hear the lord of Ferney, the bourgeois and citizen:

I do not think we understand each other on the subject of the people, whom you think worthy of education. By people I mean the populace that only has its hands to work with. I doubt whether that class of citizens will ever have time or capacity for education. They would die of hunger before they became *philosophes*. It seems to me necessary to have a class of ignorant boors. If you were cultivating a property as I am, or had ploughs to be worked, you would agree with me. It is not the workman who needs education, it is the *bon bourgeois*—the town-dweller—that is a big enough undertaking.

Although town-dwellers included many who only worked with their hands and who had not all the rights of the bourgeois, Voltaire seems to suggest that, on the whole, the town-dweller was capable of progress and the peasant at that time hardly was. The same letter to Damilaville shows another reason for Voltaire's mistrust of the people—namely, the irritation with which he noted their impassioned interest in religious questions of which they understood nothing. This time it is the *philosophe* not the landowner who sees red; it is the anniversary of St Bartholomew:

They preach virtue to the lowest classes but they should not waste their time on the comparative merits of Nestorius, of Cyril, of Jansen or Molina—I wish to God that the *bons bourgeois* had never been so infatuated about these disputes!—we should have had no religious wars or massacres of St Bartholomew. All these quarrels are started by the idle rich, and *when the populace begins to argue all is lost.*

Unfair blame has been attached to Voltaire for the last few words, which have been quoted apart from their context, thus missing the entire point. Voltaire makes a clear distinction between the "thinking masses" and the "unthinking masses" and, while severe to the latter, he writes:

It is all one to the *unthinking masses* whether they are given truth or error, wisdom or folly; they are only a blind machine and will believe one as willingly as the other. The *thinking masses* are different; they sometimes examine, they begin by doubting an absurd legend, and unluckily mistake their legend for religion. Thus they come to conclude that there is no religion, and give themselves up to crime. Anyone in Naples who doubts the miracle of St Januarius is really an atheist; in other countries a man who disbelieves it may be very religious.

We can well understand what other countries were in his mind, and which men it was that taught the people to "*think*,"

and that the best way to be *religious* was to scoff at St Januarius. Voltaire himself said repeatedly that the best way to have done with senseless quarrels was to educate the people, and at a time when there was much discussion as to how far the people was to be left to its superstition, he never hesitated to demand that it should be fully enlightened:

> It is a great question how far they have a right to treat the people, which forms nine-tenths of the human race, as mere apes. The deceiving party for fear of miscalculation has crammed the heads of the deceived with the maximum of illusions.

But when a government does not allow the masses a true vision it becomes the first victim of their violence and fanaticism. If you have allowed your subjects to be blinded by fanaticism, they will force you to appear as fanatical as themselves, and if you remove the yoke they love, they revolt.

We may contrast with the definition of the people in the letter to Tabareau, the following lines, which contradict it word for word:

"A community of human beings governed arbitrarily is exactly like a herd of cattle yoked for its owner's service. He feeds them so that they may be able to work; he fattens them to feed himself and uses the hides of some to harness others to the plough." Here it is obvious that Voltaire was on the side of the "cattle" against their exploiters, and here he shows his real feeling. As Sainte-Beuve was well aware, Voltaire was the first to rejoice at the general "amelioration of manners" due to the spread of enlightenment. In his *Précis du Siècle de Louis XV.* he writes:

> It is not enough for the better class of citizens to be enlightened; the people is always prone to fanaticism, and perhaps there is no remedy for this disease but the enlightenment of the people itself; but at present it is nourished only on superstitions, and then there is an outcry against what these superstitions produce.

The remedy is indicated by Voltaire and, applied by the *philosophes*, did not fail to produce the happiest effects. He declares elsewhere (*Sermon des Cinquante*):

> Has not the people become accustomed to give up being fed on superstition? Courage is needed for a further step; the people is not as imbecile as is supposed: it will accept without any difficulty a simple sensible religion.

It only remains to carry the work to its logical conclusion, the results are inevitable:

> Every day enlightenment spreads in the merchants' shops as in the nobles' mansions. The fruits of this enlightenment must be cultivated, and all the more because it is impossible to prevent their ripening.

This passage occurs in the *Traité sur la Tolérance*, in a chapter headed: "Is it useful to keep the people in a state of superstition?" To which Voltaire replies: "You must not feed the people on *acorns* when God deigns to feed them on bread!" To Linguet, who feared the results of the spread of knowledge, Voltaire answered (15th March 1767):

> When dealing with what you call "the people" we must distinguish between those whose occupations require a decent education and those which only involve manual labour and daily effort. The latter class is the most numerous, and the only recreation it will ever want is to go to High Mass or to the tavern, in both of which places they can sing: but the more skilled artisans whose occupations force them to think, and to improve their taste and extend their knowledge, are beginning to read all over Europe. Parisians, whose knowledge of the Swiss is confined to those employed by the nobility, or to those who, in Molière's plays, speak an unintelligible patois, would be astonished to see in Swiss towns, and especially in Geneva, nearly all those employed in manufacture spending all their spare time in reading. No, Sir, all is not lost when the people is enabled to realise that it has a soul. On the contrary all is lost when it is treated like a herd of cattle, for sooner or later they will gore you with their horns. An ignorant and savage people was led formerly by learned fanatics who cried: "Kill, in the name of God!" In our days I would defy Cromwell to cause a revolution in England by his hysterical rantings, or John of Leyden to make himself King of Münster, or Cardinal Retz to set up barricades in Paris.

Here we have Voltaire's real view, not a mere outburst, but a consistently developed idea. How far was Voltaire a democrat? The author of the above passage cannot be accused of failure to recognise the benefits of education, or the intimate connection between moral improvement and progress in enlightenment. Voltaire not only acknowledged moral progress but took an unduly optimistic view of the true character of his contemporaries, when he thought them above raising barricades, in the very century that was to end in blood and revolution.

This optimism was shared at times by all the *philosophes*.

It was Marmontel who said: "The abstract and seductive idea of a nation mild and generous filled men's minds."

The article *La Peuple* in the *Encyclopédie* contains an indignant protest against those who wish to keep the people in misery so that it may work the more and be the more docile to its sovereign's orders:

> Who would believe that in our own day anyone would dare to make the infamous suggestion that such men should be denied comfort in order to make them obedient? The contrary is true, men never have, and never will, put forth all their strength and industry if they see the products of their efforts swallowed up by taxes, and they will confine themselves to earn the minimum to support life. In regard to obedience it is a shame to slander innumerable innocent people; the King has no more loyal subjects, nor, I venture to say, better friends.

As the masses did not subscribe to the *Encyclopédie* it cannot be said that this was written to flatter them!

Vauban, who certainly loved the poor and sympathised with their sufferings, wrote that the results of poverty were, first, to make the people feeble and unhealthy, especially the children, many of whom died for lack of good food; second, to make men slack and dispirited, knowing that they would gain little from their work; third, to create liars, thieves, swindlers, always ready to perjure themselves for payment and to get drunk whenever they could afford it. The *philosophes* may be allowed to repeat the same argument without being accused of a feeling of disgust for the people whose interests they claimed to protect. There is no need for us to make them out democrats. They were nearly all bourgeois and they too were in fear of the people, they foresaw that once the barriers were down, and the floods out, town and country would be devastated by the worst excesses. Nevertheless few of them failed to show at certain moments a fine confidence in the masses to whom the light of philosophy was penetrating little by little. They had need, indeed, of robust faith to bear the scenes that passed before their eyes. They had their hours of discouragement. In the *Spectateur Français* Marivaux has left us a portrait of the people of Paris that is not flattering. The same complaints of the drunkenness of the masses in general are heard from beginning to end of the century.

The *philosophes*, in demanding a reduction in the number of Church festivals, remark that twenty festivals condemn ten

million workmen to idleness and expose them to debauchery twenty times a year. *L'Ami des Hommes* denounces the consequences of these holidays, when the drunken workman is incapable of working for days. Other writers describe the horrible public enjoyment of executions. But in spite of all, the *philosophes* find excuses for their excesses in the wretched condition of the people.

The *Encyclopédie*, in its article, *Misère*, says:

> There are few characters strong enough to resist the degrading effects of poverty. The lower classes are incredibly stupid. I know not what blinds them to their present wretched condition, which will be still worse in old age; poverty is the mother of crime, and a sovereign who creates poverty will answer in this world or the next for the crimes to which poverty has led.

The article is by Diderot, who tried to raise the self-respect of the people, and when they were accused of cruelly gloating over scenes of blood, he tried to show, in *Jacques le Fataliste*, that the scene of execution was almost a school of pity:

> What, in your opinion, is the motive which attracts the populace to public executions? You are wrong if you think it is inhumanity. The people is not inhumane. It would rescue the unhappy victim from the scaffold if it could. It goes to the *Place de Grève* in search of a scene that it can later describe to its neighbours—one scene or another, it is much the same provided it can play a part and attract attention. The fury of the people is terrible but does not last. Its misery makes it pitiful; it turns its eyes away from the horror it has come to see, its heart is touched, it turns away weeping.

More than one *philosophe* found something very paradoxical in this passage, but Diderot's opinion did not differ much from those of Voltaire when he declared in his *Plan d'une Université* that the progress of civilisation was connected with that of knowledge:

> A university [he wrote] is a school whose door is open without distinction to all the children of the nation, and where masters, paid by the State, impart an elementary knowledge of all the sciences. I say "without distinction," because it would be as cruel as it would be foolish to condemn the lower ranks of society to ignorance. All classes suffer if deprived of instruction. As the number of cottages and other private dwellings is to palaces in the proportion of ten thousand to one, the odds are ten thousand to one that genius and virtue will come from the cottage rather than the palace. Virtue! Yes, virtue, because it needs more reason, enlightenment and strength of character to be a good man than is generally supposed. How can a man do right if he is unenlightened?

Admittedly, Voltaire was not in more complete agreement with Diderot than with Jean-Jacques. Diderot is the democrat who even goes so far as to say that with regard to moral education the child of the poor is better off than the child of the rich. And as Diderot has not Voltaire's prejudices as a landowner he carries his argument to its logical conclusion. We need a people less fanatical, more moral, more devoted to its real duties, let us therefore have a more enlightened people. That granted, nothing stops Diderot. All citizens without exception are to receive the education without which no one can be a good citizen—in addition to the religious catechism, that is, the first principles of their country's laws, and the duties of citizens. The *philosophes* demanded that such a lay catechism should be compiled, thus proving that they wished the people to have at least elementary instruction. Rousseau of course took a strong line:

"Public education," he declared, "regulated by Government, is one of the fundamental principles of popular government." From the days of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the reformers demanded the extension of education to town and country; their champion, Turgot, when in power, declared in his *Mémoire au Roi sur les Municipalités*: "The first and most important of all the institutions I should consider necessary would be the forming of a Council of National instruction, which would have the direction of all academies, universities, colleges and small schools"; and he outlined a plan of this State education, on which he counted firmly to put new life into the French monarchy. Small wonder that the *philosophes* were reproached with wishing to spread education among the masses without weighing the consequences.

Madame de Grapigny, in her play, *La Fille d'Aristide*, had a scene satirising the philosophy of the day which she watered down in the final revision; in this scene, as revised, Parménion said to Cléomène, the *philosophe*:

Spread enlightenment? Why the masses have no need of enlightenment, and your *philosophes* teach little to those who are above the masses. The knowledge spread among the people (and how many are merely the people) only leads them astray, by destroying their principles and their useful prejudices and giving them

nothing to replace them. The general corruption of Athens was perhaps due to a too great extension of knowledge."

Diderot replied thus:

From the highest-placed Minister to the lowest peasant, it is good for everyone to be able to read, write and reckon. The nobility say that this renders the peasant quarrelsome and litigious. The cultured say that is the reason why every small farmer who lives in any degree of comfort, instead of leaving his plough to his son, wishes to make him a savant, a theologian, or at least a schoolmaster. There is no need to pay much attention to the nobleman's complaint; it resolves itself perhaps into this, that a peasant who can read and write is more difficult than others to oppress. As to the second grievance, it is for the legislator to make the lot of the agriculturists so secure and respected that it is not abandoned.

So might Voltaire, too, have replied if he had been less afraid of losing his ploughmen. This passage, read together with Voltaire's letter to Linguet, justifies us in asserting that it is unfair to the *philosophes* in general to represent them as taking the same view as the intellectual aristocrats who thought the people too stupid and contemptible to be worth educating.

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MOREOVER their influence on the people was not due to their theories on education, which we have only explained in order to show their attitude towards the Fourth Estate, and the feelings that guided them in defending it. It was all very well to consider a plan for a university! The people was wretched, and the urgent need was to consider how to improve its conditions. This was the absorbing care of the *philosophes*; and it was by this they won the interest of the people. We can imagine the intensity of this movement which drew men's minds to questions of social economy as a result of the philosophic movement:

About the year 1750 [wrote Dupont de Nemours in a *Notice des Économistes*] M. Quesnay and M. de Gournay examined the possibility of discovering the basis of political economy in certain natural laws, and of connecting them so as to form a science. M. de Gournay, a merchant, supported the principle of free competition in commerce. M. Quesnay, an educated farmer, paid special attention to agriculture and its produce, which he considered the true source of the riches and prosperity of nations.

According to the side they supported, the *philosophes* favoured the respective organs of Quesnay and de Gournay, the *Ephémèrides du Citoyen* or the *Journal Économique*. In general they plumed themselves on belonging to "the third party, which adopts no system and constitutes no school," and which, according to Dupont de Nemours, included Turgot, Condillac, Adam Smith, Germain Garnier, Sismondi, etc., etc. Grimm calls them "the pietists of philosophy." From the beginning the *philosophes* and the pietists were mixed up together. Bachaumont thus describes Quesnay's following:

> A new sect has arisen in Paris called Economists. They are political *philosophes* who have written about agrarian questions or internal administration . . . at first they wanted to rival the Encyclopædists but they have gradually drawn together, and the two sects seem to have united in one.

Mallet du Pan attacked them with unheard-of violence, as charlatans, madmen and atheists. Diderot said that, like doctors, they worked on a corpse. Voltaire ridiculed them in *L'Homme aux Quarante Écus*, but elsewhere expressed his enthusiastic admiration for Turgot, whose edicts were based on the principles of the *philosophes* and the physiocrats. In truth the *philosophes* had too much in common with the economists to fight them.

The *Encyclopédie* published Turgot's articles, and the writing of the two important articles on farmers and grain was entrusted to Quesnay.

The economists were Encyclopædists, and the article *Agriculture* contained a eulogy of the new school of thought. . . .

A recent historian of French Socialism, having remarked that after the political and Catholic problem, the social problem, and next to it the economic problem, were bound to attract the notice of the *philosophes*, concludes: "D'Argenson and Quesnay and the Marquis de Mirabeau, Turgot and Necker, complete the work begun by Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, d'Holbach and Helvetius."

It is easy to understand how they were classed together in the eyes of the world, so that Madame du Deffand expressed the feelings of the enemies of the *philosophes* when she greeted

the fall of Turgot as follows: "Except the economists and Encyclopædists everyone agrees that he is mad, and as extravagant and presumptuous as anyone can be." Turgot belonged to both classes, and the *philosophes* considered his fall a setback to their theories and plans. What improvements were made in the position of agriculture were clearly due in part to the *philosophes*. The Encyclopædists placed agriculture in the seat of honour. Voltaire devoted many pages to it in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, and Diderot himself undertook the subject in the *Encyclopédie*. The *philosophes* defended the peasants against feudal services, and their views are to be found reproduced in the *cahiers*. The *Encyclopédie* was no doubt too optimistic in asserting: "For the last fifteen years agriculture in France, which has been so long neglected, has shaken off its languor and oppression, and has made such progress that it may be said to have reached its highest perfection."

At any rate agriculture profited by the efforts of the *philosophes* and men of science.

In 1789 the *Cahier* of Nemours, written by Dupont, while not ignoring the horrors of the *ancien régime*, declared: "For twenty-five years the cultivation, the population and the wealth of France have sensibly progressed, with the growth of knowledge."

So that those who had done so much for the growth of knowledge had a right to claim to have shared in the improvement.

They all denounced the exodus from the country to the towns. They called the attention of the world to the condition of the rural labourer and demanded honours for him as well as comforts. In 1765 the Academy of Caen proposed to "bestow honorific distinction on labourers, without undermining the simplicity which is the essential basis of that useful and respectable employment."

The article *Agriculture* in the *Encyclopédie* contained these lines:

> The prejudice against an art so noble yet so despised is at last dispelled, thanks to philosophy, which has taught men their equality in the natural order.

And the article *Population* had the following:

> If there must be distinctions in society they are due to virtuous and useful men who enrich without corrupting it. This has been the principle of the most enlightened governments: in ancient Rome a freeman might only follow the professions of arms or of agriculture.

As there were more readers of the *Encyclopédie* than of the proceedings of the Academy of Caen the *philosophes* deserve the honour of having launched the idea of the "dignity of agriculture." On the other hand the people of the towns were indebted to the *philosophes* for having directed public attention to social and economic reforms. Every sort of panacea was put forward, and every sort of social Utopia imagined. Amongst others, a Madame Plisson, of Chartres, suggested that gamesters should devote their winnings to an "Academy of Charity" for the relief of the destitute.

The public shared the optimistic illusions of the *philosophes*, and the masses who were the object of so much novel solicitude were puzzled but touched. The *philosophes* wished to be considered the spokesmen of the people and to take the place once occupied by the clergy as protectors of the poor, even before the thrones of kings.

Marmontel's *Memoirs* give an interesting conversation between a *philosophe* on the one hand and de Broglie, Bishop of Noyon and Marbœuf, Bishop of Autun, on the other:

> On another occasion the Bishop of Noyon, continually reproaching the *philosophes* with taking too great liberties: "It is true, Monseigneur," I replied, "that they take it upon themselves to usurp some of your noblest functions, but only when you fail to fulfil them." "What functions?" he asked. "Those of preaching from the roof-tops the truths that are too rarely told to sovereigns or their Ministers or to the flatterers who surround them. Since the exile of Fénelon, or perhaps since the touching little course of moral instruction given by Massillon to Louis XII. as a child, useless because premature, have the clergy once protested boldly against public crimes and vices?"

The *philosophes* looked upon themselves as constituting an apostolate, a lay church, as Grimm described it, with its hierarchy of priests and brothers and its regulations.

It cannot be said that there was complete accord among them on points of dogma or that there was no discussion as

to the reforms to be carried out. The Church of the *philosophes* had as many heretics as believers. The important point for its influence was that it had developed from being merely an opinion into being a sect. Voltaire had wished for this consummation, and from the day when he became Lord of Ferney had devoted his efforts to constituting a kind of lay clergy:

> Unite all our followers; courage! Let us all pull together, Gentlemen, numbers always command respect. Rise in revolt and you will be masters!

Such were the urgent counsels he sent to d'Alembert, and when he wished to reconcile him with Duclos he wrote:

> Is it the time for the enemies of superstition to fall out? Ought they not all to unite against rogues and fanatics? They have dared in a sermon before the King to denounce as dangerous a book published with the King's sanction, a book which does honour to the nation and is useful to the whole world. And will not those who shared in making the book unsheathe their sword in its defence?

He addressed the same admonition to Duclos:

> The time has come when all the *philosophes* must be brothers, otherwise the rogues and fanatics will devour them one after the other.

This time Voltaire had the pleasure of reuniting these two "brothers." He repeated exactly the same thing to other members of the scattered flock. After Morellet had been sent to the Bastille for his *Vision de Palissot*, Thieriot wrote the following counsel from the patriarch:

> All the Da(lembert)Dé, Di(derot) Do(D'Holbach) Du(clos) les H(elvetius) les G(rimm) etc., ought to sup together twice a week. My children, love one another!—if you can!

On another occasion he wrote:

> It is disgraceful that philosophy cannot do for us what it did for the ancients. It united them; here only superstition has that privilege.

Apparently a union was effected about 1760 and Voltaire, who had declared he would die content if he saw such an event, had the joy of seeing Marmontel, d'Alembert, Duclos, de Saint-Lambert and Diderot marching under the same banner.

In fact, and in spite of divergencies of opinion, the union

was close enough for the people to understand, vaguely at first, but more clearly later, that there was a class privileged not by birth or fortune, but by talent and personal merit, and that this class was attempting on the one hand to influence the Government, which feared its power, and on the other to guide the nation towards progress and happiness. "On the one side is philosophy," remarks M. Brunel, "on the other the throne and the altar: such are the catchwords of the moment." A new idea was beginning to prevail, and to be repeated by contemporary criticism, that the thinkers had elaborated a vast plan for the enfranchisement of the human spirit and the improvement of social conditions, and that each one had his allotted task in carrying it out, but all directed towards the same object and under one control.

The people was struck by what united the *philosophes*, not by what separated them. Barni said with truth: "The *Encyclopédie* is evidence of the harmony of the *philosophes* in the eighteenth century, at least *on certain capital points*, and this harmony, in spite of sad rivalries and deplorable quarrels, is *one of the causes of the power of la philosophie at that period.*"

In what has been called the *Credo* of the Encyclopædists there were many articles that the people could not understand and which might not have interested it; but in the beginning the protests inspired by the sight of the crushing misery of the poor did not fail to touch it; later on it could easily understand the generosity of feeling which prompted those thinkers who preferred to rank as "citizens" rather than as men of letters. The Abbé Garnier says that the eighteenth century defined a man of letters as one whose chief occupation it was to cultivate his mind by study so as to improve himself and be more useful to society in contrast with the *litterator*, a term of contempt among the Romans. The "man of letters" in the eighteenth century was the *philosophe*. To the people he appeared as a thinker, guided, in d'Alembert's phrase, by "public spirit and the wish to see men happy." His writings were worthy, therefore, to be read by kings and commoners. Hence his pride and independence.

The writers had a conscious pride in the part they played.

Duclos declared that " of all empires that of the intellectuals, though invisible, is the widest spread. Those in power command, but the intellectuals govern, because in the end they form public opinion, which sooner or later subdues or upsets all despotisms." La Bruyère would not have written that.

The *philosophes* have been blamed for self-glorification, and, on the strength of their lofty conception of their vocation, for having adopted a dictatorial tone; de Barante makes this accusation, and if we agree with him we must also admit, as he does, that: " together with the thirst for influence, the intellectuals had a keen desire for improvement and love of goodness, which may have blinded them to their share of self-conceit."

It certainly blinded those who saw them from outside; the people saw and admired them as banded together for a generous task, feared and respected by the authorities, carrying out their functions as thinkers by rousing and guiding public opinion. Voltaire returns again and again to the idea: " Men are ruled by opinion, and the *philosophes* are gradually changing general opinion."

This claim was justified; the *philosophes* ruled opinion not only in the privileged classes but in those of the people, whom they trained in ideas and who were grateful to them for their championship of the downtrodden, and for their struggle against the iniquities of the *ancien régime*.

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THE writings of the *philosophes* were remarkably well calculated to create for them a public following. They had to a supreme degree the talent of making ideas carry. It must be admitted that they sacrificed depth to clearness, and subtlety to popularity. But they influenced the people precisely because they could be understood by the artisans who knew how to read, and still more because they could be expounded to the illiterate.

They attracted the public not merely by the ribaldry which some of them employed, though ribaldry might sometimes help to attract attention. By presenting their ideas in the clearest

possible form they gave their reader the satisfaction of understanding, or at least of thinking he had understood. At the same time they provided him with examples and formulas by which he could in turn spread the propaganda among those who neither subscribed to the *Encyclopédie* nor to a library. Buffon wrote to Madame Necker that there must necessarily be more great writers than profound thinkers, as people were writing brilliantly every day about superficial things. Fénelon, Voltaire and Jean-Jacques, he declared, would not leave the slightest trace compared with the profound thought of Bacon, Newton or Montesquieu. We may ignore the extraordinary classification that puts Voltaire with Fénelon and separates him from Montesquieu. What we have to note is that the "superficial thing" alluded to is the hatred of despotism and of autocracy; the desire for political and social institutions which would assure full liberty and their rights to citizens; the hatred of religious fanaticism and the love of freedom of thought; the hatred of feudalism and the principle of equality before the law; the hatred of fiscal inequalities and the principle of an equal incidence of taxation; the hatred of social injustice and the extinction of pauperism; the hatred of the barbarities of the Code and the reform of the administration of justice; commercial freedom; the horror of war and the horror of slavery.

If the profound thinkers and metaphysicians alluded to by Buffon had taken an interest in such a revolution and had made it succeed, they might claim to have left their trace without having to rely on the help of the people.

How could the people have followed them or co-operated with them?

I doubt very much whether those great men would have achieved any result, whereas the *philosophes* became the real educators of the nation, because, if I may so put it, they offered it primary education, and placed the problems of political, social and economic science within its reach, making them perhaps a little too easy, but simplifying and clarifying them.

The method is explained in the *Encyclopédie* in the article *Philosophe*:

The *philosophe* builds up his principles from a large number of special observations. The people adopts the principle without thinking of the observations on which it is based; it believes that the rule exists on its own account, but the *philosophe* traces the origin of the rule and knows its real worth and how far it can be applied.

Such was the *philosophe's* method; where the people of the eighteenth century was concerned, none other was suitable. What does the people need? asked the *philosophe*: definite principles, clear formulæ, striking examples, reasoning well expressed and that convinces it. Our theoretical dissertations will earn us the support of the *élite* of the nation; but it is what is easily impressed on the memory which will earn the approval of the majority.

All the arguments about the duties of kings to their subjects are forgotten more easily than the anecdote in the *Encyclopédie* in the article *Législateur*:

In the State Assembly of Sweden, a senator recently said to the tutor of the heir to the throne: "Lead the prince to the cottages of the labouring poor, give him a near view of the unfortunate and teach him that the peoples of Europe were not created simply to serve the whims of a dozen sovereigns."

Or again, the crowd would remember the comment in the article *Patrie* in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* on the bitter proverb: "A poor man has no country":

A confectioner's apprentice, who had been at college and who still remembered a little Cicero, set up on one occasion as a lover of his country. "What have you to do with your country?" asked a neighbour. "Is it your own? Is it the village where you were born and which you have never revisited? Is it the street in which your parents lived—your parents whose ruin has forced you to bake these little pies in order to live? Is it the town hall where you will never rise to be a police official's clerk? Is it the church of Notre Dame where you have never succeeded even in being a chorister, whereas a ridiculous man is archbishop and duke with an income of twenty thousand gold *louis*?" The confectioner's boy had no answer to give. A thoughtful listener to this conversation came to the conclusion that in a great country there were often millions of men without a country.

The same article, *Patrie*, suggested another line of thought: "No conquests can be made without causing misery." Montesquieu had said: "France will be ruined by its soldiers." D'Holbach developed this idea, supported a national militia

as against a professional army and condemned the militarist in a way bound to arrest the thought of peaceful citizens who were intimidated by the soldier's prestige.

Like savages, we still respect and admire force above everything. In the early days of human society man prized courage because it was then the most useful quality to nations which were all war-like. In modern civilised nations, which in their own interest should be pacific, it is high time to honour peaceful qualities that bring greater benefit to a society whose needs have changed.

Raynal went further:

The increase of taxation and the difficulty in paying it reduce to want and starvation the families which are the parents of the army. If universal oppression is the first evil caused by great numbers of soldiers, their idleness is the second, the third is deterioration in quality—the more soldiers there are the less they are worth; the fourth evil is the strength given to despotism by large armies.

The people had thus plenty of weapons furnished for debate. What could be more effective than the following allusion to Court favourites?

They talk of nothing but the King; the King has said this; the King wishes it; I have seen the King; I have supped with the King. These words are always listened to with awe and in the end are taken for the sovereign's orders.

All the *philosophes* had more or less Voltaire's method of turning abuses into ridicule.

Raynal thus attacks the right of primogeniture:

If a savage on his death-bed left two bows and two sons, and if he were asked what was to be done with the two bows, would he not answer that one was to be given to each son, and if he left both to one son, would it not be assumed that the disinherited son was the fruit of his wife's misconduct?

The laws must be based on general consent. Mably thus develops the principle:

A sovereign's orders are calmly headed: "such is my good pleasure." What a reason, what a motive, what a title to my obedience! Is legislation, man's most sacred possession, merely a hunting party?

Voltaire provides most of these sallies and is for that reason the most popular. Diderot offers the following definition of civil liberty:

Civil liberty is founded on the best possible laws, and in a State where they are established, a man who was judged according to law, even if he were to be hanged the next day, would have greater liberty than a pasha in Turkey.

In order to discover the demands of the Fourth Estate, it is only necessary to glance through the *philosophes'* writings. The *Encyclopédie*, in the article *Indigent*, has:

One of the most disastrous consequences of maladministration is to divide society into two classes, one living in opulence, the other in want.

—a formidable indictment of a regime, pointing out the division into "haves" and "have nots," and teaching the latter that their misfortune is due to bad government and would therefore end when this bad government was upset; an indictment remembered as easily as that still more terrible one by Rousseau:

The social pact between the two classes can be put in a nutshell: you need me because I am rich and you are poor; let us then agree: I will allow you the honour of serving me on condition that you give me the little you have left, to pay me for the trouble I take in giving you orders.

In our own days, efforts have been made to insure the worker against want in his old age. The problem was boldly stated in the eighteenth century and Marmontel claimed the right of the poor to security from want after years of work:

Mankind is subject to one natural evil, pain. Another comes to him from society, destitution. No living being can be immune from the one, but everywhere work ought to be able to protect from the other. It is an unpardonable crime for society to allow want to overtake the labourer who feeds his fellow-men, the artisan who serves them, or the soldier who defends them. That is the real evil, for which those who rule peoples are responsible before earth and heaven.

None of these doctrines was to be wasted, any more than the protest in Damilaville's article on *Population* in the *Encyclopédie*, with its protest against the brutality of the privileged class towards the workman.

Anyone who rereads it will note how many ideas were bound to circulate from it even among the most ignorant, including the suggestive note that the rich have fewer children than the poor. Above all, there are the emphatic protests of the *philosophes* against the iniquitous taxes of the *ancien régime*.

These generous denunciations did more than anything to gain the strong support of the people for the Encyclopædists. As is well known, the greatest cause of the poverty of the masses was the crushing taxation.

The Treasury was equally merciless to the worker in the fields or in the town, and every kind of tax rained down on the shoulders of the poor wretches; the poor devil was crushed until his blood ran out.

Mercier gives a heart-rending picture of a workman's home.

The wretched man has four children and in the chimney corner he takes refuge with his family. "One day I opened the door, which only had a latch; the room was completely bare; the man, creeping out of his corner, weak and ill, said: 'I thought you were the garrison to collect the capitation tax.'" By "the garrison" he meant the soldier billeted on the starving poor when they were behindhand in the payment of their capitation tax, which was levied on everyone who had any sort of roof over his head, and for which the tenant of the house was responsible if his lodgers failed. The "garrison" had to be lodged and paid so much a day, and I am only astonished that more of them were not strangled, especially as they were drawn from the less worthy.

Weighed down by crushing burdens, tortured by crying abuses, the people was further irritated by seeing that those best able to pay the taxes were exempt and that the beggar had to pay for the noble, the priest, the lawyer, the financier and the State official.

The *cahiers* are unanimous: "We can do no more, we are utterly exhausted, ask money of those who have it"; such were the despairing cries that resounded from one end of the kingdom to the other.

The article *Population* vigorously echoed these complaints:

Those who say that the poorer the people, the larger the families—the heavier the taxation placed upon them, the greater their effort to pay it—blaspheme against the human race. They ought to experience the bitter destitution to which they condemn their fellow-citizens in order to learn how false and atrocious is their attitude.

The article denounced the iniquitous incidence of taxation:

> Every citizen should be obliged to contribute to the community his fair share of labour and taxes; whoever evades these contributions is a bad citizen, a useless member, a burden on society; but the taxes should be proportioned to the riches of the country and fairly adjusted to the capacity of each citizen.

The people could understand such arguments and must have been grateful to the *philosophes* for their eloquent denunciation of the evils that were destroying it.

Diderot, in his article *Privilège*, not daring to express his views fully, allowed a certain number of exemptions as "fair and decent," but protested against their abuse.

> A distinction [he wrote] should be made in every case between persons who have rendered real services to the State and the large number of useless persons whose only claim is a title vouched for by a bit of parchment bought cheap.

Voltaire put the matter tersely: "In the matter of taxation, every privilege is an injustice."

The reformers were not unanimous as to what taxes were the fairest and least vexatious; Voltaire criticised the land tax, and another defended the food taxes, and various differences of opinion existed. Nevertheless all agreed on a certain number of all-important reforms, such as the suppression of privilege, and everyone agreed with Voltaire's dictum: "The main point is that the whole nation should not be despoiled by an army of officials in order that a score of bloodsuckers at Court may feast on its blood."

They also proclaimed the principle of taxation according to power to pay, which was the exact reverse of the method in vogue. D'Alembert showed forcibly the distinction between absolute necessities and relative necessities, and that civic virtue demanded the sacrifice of the latter to the former:

> In states in which numerous citizens lack absolute necessities, those who have more than bare necessities owe to the State at least a part of the surplus.

The corollary of this principle is that society owes the absolute essentials of life to its members, and, *à fortiori*, should not deprive them of any part of these necessities in order to furnish others with what are only relative necessities.

This all points clearly to the exemption of the poorest classes from taxation. Diderot, in his *Politique des Souverains*, writes: "When need is satisfied, the rest belongs to the Treasury." If modified to read: "When need is satisfied, the rest may be subjected to the Treasury," we shall have the idea of the Encyclopædists. Diderot expressed this notion in his *Dialogue entre un Père et sa Fille* in a defence of his plan for the publication of a general scale of taxes and their incidence:

In that way poverty would be recognised and consequently the debt of the rich; inequality of incidence would be prevented, for who dare publicly avow preferences due either to interest or timidity? Taxes should only be levied on those who are above the level of real need. All below that level belong to the class of the poor and this class should pay nothing.

That is also the meaning of Raynal's definition: "Taxation may be defined as the sacrifice of a portion of property for the protection of the other portion," and Raynal attacks the food taxes levied on essential articles of food, because they affect absolute necessities, to which society has no right:

To levy taxes on essential foodstuffs is cruel to the highest degree. Man's right to existence is above all social laws. Has he lost it by the establishment of laws? By squeezing the destitute of their bare subsistence the State deprives them of all strength. Of a poor man it makes a beggar, of a workman an idler, of an unfortunate a rogue, and thus leads through starvation to the gallows.

Jaucourt demands, in the *Encyclopédie*, that labour should be exempt from taxation:

It is bad policy to tax the workman's industry, for it forces him to pay to the State precisely because he creates for the State values that would not exist without him; it is the way to destroy industry, ruin the State and cut off its supplies.

And Damilaville declared:

When all the nation's wealth is concentrated in a few hands, the masses must be in want, and crushed by the burden of taxation. In what proportion does the slight contribution made from enormous superfluity stand to the necessaries of which the poor are robbed?

As was stated above, the *philosophes* believed in graduation of taxation. The article *Impôt* in the *Encyclopédie* stated the question thus:

Although all subjects benefit equally by the protection of the Government and the security it guarantees them, inequalities of wealth and of the advantages they derive from it demand that taxation should be adjusted to those inequalities and should be in geometrical progression, for taxes must not be levied on necessaries. As long as the taxes are not levied according to capacity to pay, the condition of this kingdom cannot improve; one part of the nation will live in opulence, eating at one meal what would feed a hundred families, whilst the other part is daily starving to death.

When Rousseau declaimed against the unequal advantages derived from society by rich and poor his eloquence was only giving new life to an idea already familiar to the *philosophes*. He represented their views when he sketched the theory of graduated taxation, much in Voltaire's manner:

He who only has the bare necessaries of life should pay nothing; taxation on him who has a surplus may, if need be, extend to everything beyond necessaries. He may urge that on account of his rank what is superfluous for a man in a lower position is necessary for him, but that is untrue, for a nobleman only has two legs like a cowman, and each only has one belly. . . . Moreover the law does not oblige him to live in style, and refinement is not an argument against justice.

The beasts of burden of the *ancien régime* had, then, found defenders, who taught them to defend themselves. The article *Impôt* in the *Encyclopédie* pointed out the line of reform to be followed:

Voltaire expressed these just claims in a more striking and familiar form. A peasant who groaned over the burden of exactions would remember and be convinced by the following lines:

The agriculturist asks why they take half his property to pay the soldiers, whereas a hundredth part would be enough; he is told that besides the soldiers, arts and luxuries have to be paid for, that nothing is wasted, that the Persians assigned to their Queen towns and villages to pay for her girdles, slippers and pins. He will reply that he knows nothing about Persia and resents their taking half his property to pay for girdles, slippers and pins, which he could supply much cheaper, and that it is simply swindling. They will teach him reason by throwing him into a dungeon and selling his furniture. If he resists, the extortioners, whom the New Testament also condemned, will hang him, and that will make his neighbours much more amenable.

Is it now clear why people turned their eyes to the *philosophes* as to supporters and saviours, devoted heart and soul to the victims of the established order? "A just Government,"

declared Trudaine, "is on the side of the weak." Mercier, seeing the extraordinary development of charitable institutions, asked whether it were possible that destitute people still existed in France; he said perhaps it was due to bad distribution. He was wrong; it was the consequence of the evils of the *ancien régime*. Public and private charity might have still further increased their institutions; no hospitals or refuges could reduce want. Good fiscal laws, humane and just laws, ensuring reasonable equality in place of scandalous inequality, were what was needed.

What the *philosophes* did was to give currency in public opinion to the principles of more equitable government, and for that the unfortunate owed them thanks; in that way the Encyclopædists gained their confidence and were accepted as helpful guides and benefactors.

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IT was more by this method of campaigning than through their religious polemics that the *philosophes* got their hold on the people. They exerted a deep enough influence, however, by fighting for the principle of tolerance. Voltaire furnishes a rich harvest of apoththegms pouring forth ridicule and odium on the quarrels within the Church in the eighteenth century:

> The Jesuits try to be independent of the hierarchy, the *Saint-Médardiens* to destroy it; the former are snakes, the latter bears, but both can be made use of; vipers make good soup and good muffs are made from bearskins. . . . Brothers, let us be good citizens, good subjects of the King, let us fly from fools and rogues, and for God's sake let us be neither Jansenists nor Molinists!

We shall find him saying in the *Credo* of the Abbé Saint-Pierre (which he says he "copied faithfully"):

> I think the only difference God instituted between his children was that between crime and virtue. I think that theological disputes are at the same time the most ridiculous farce and the most horrible scourge in the world, next to war, pestilence, famine and smallpox.

Of course this is not a high line of argument, but it was what was best calculated to impress the people:

> "How do you propose to preach to country folk?" asked Ariston of Teotime, the good priest, in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. "As I should preach before the King. I should always speak of morality and never of controversy. May God

preserve me from investigating concomitant grace, efficacious grace which man resists, and sufficient grace, which is not sufficient. . . . I should try to do right myself and to lead men to do so. I should not try to turn men into theologians and should be one myself as little as possible." "You would serve God and your neighbour, but what part would you take in ecclesiastical disputes?" "None, there can be no dispute about virtue, which is of God. Quarrels are made about opinions, which are of men."

Again in another passage:

Poor humanity, whether clad in the green robe, the turban, the surplice, or cloak and ruffles, should never try to assert authority where there is only a question of reason.

In these and similar passages Voltaire and his allies fought against fanaticism and prepared the way for the generation of 1789, certainly less religious, but much more tolerant, and which, according to Mercier, made freedom infinitely more possible.

Voltaire claimed the credit for philosophy:

The philosophic spirit, which is nothing else but reason, has become with sensible people the only antidote to epidemics of fanaticism. . . . There are generally rascals who lead in the fanatics and put the dagger into their hands. There is only one religion in the world that has not been stained by fanaticism, and it is that of the wise men of China. . . . Philosophic sects have been not only exempt from this plague, but have been the remedy for it.

Philosophy also performed a popular task by attacking the monks, who were not loved by the people; Voltaire, Diderot and Raynal undermined superstition in this way. In a letter from Voltaire to Frederick the Great we find the following instructive passage: "Your idea of attacking superstition through the monks is a master stroke. When once monks are abolished, error is exposed to universal contempt." The people supported these attacks wholeheartedly, directed, as they were, against idlers who had always been the butts of popular wit.

In *La Voix du Sage et du Peuple* (1750) we read:

If a prince, the shepherd of his people, wished to restore to his flock and to the laws of nature the foolish men and women who have taken vows against the propagation of the race, vows fatal to society and taken by persons too young even to be allowed the control of property, society would bless that prince for ever.

There is a convent, useless in every way, which enjoys a revenue of two hundred thousand *livres*. It is clear that if that sum were distributed to a hundred officers, who were then provided with wives, a hundred good citizens would be rewarded, and a hundred young women provided for instead of fifty good-for-nothings. Everyone would welcome this; the only obstacle has been superstition, but faith and reason will crush superstition. It is fortunate for the State that *philosophes* are impressing these principles on the minds of men.

It is to be noted that the *philosophes* claimed the credit of educating opinion. Their popularity was increased by their demand that the burden of the poor should be alleviated by forcing the clergy to bear its share of public charges:

In France, where the reasoning faculty is being daily improved, this faculty teaches that the Church should contribute to State charges in proportion to its revenues, and that those whose function it is to inculcate justice should be the first to set an example. Only Hottentots could be satisfied with a government where men were allowed to say: "It is for those who work to pay; we ought to pay nothing because we do nothing." It would be an outrage on God and man for subjects to say: "The State has given us everything, and we only owe it our prayers."

What was the result of all this? Not the disappearance of religious feeling among the people—such a result would have surprised and pained most of the *philosophes*—but that religious fanaticism was cooled. "If Luther and Calvin returned to the world," cried Voltaire, "they would create no more sensation than the Scotists and Thomists, because they would come when men are beginning to be enlightened."

But in reality was religious feeling not affected? So much can hardly be claimed, nor that all the *philosophes* were unaware that they were weakening it by making war on the abuses on which the Church throve. But they would not deliberately have deprived the people of that check, and would certainly have feared the effect of irreligion on the mob. They had the right to believe that *l'infâme* to which they had given the death-blow was fanaticism and not religion.

Hardy saw the stormers of the Bastille pass before his eyes in devout ranks between two rows of national guards, and their procession marching to Saint Geneviève, the revered patron saint of the city. In the streets were the same time-honoured decorations and flowers, and incense rose to heaven

with the prayers of the crowd. On 31st May 1793, in the market quarter, the kneeling Parisians bent their heads for the blessing of the priests, and that very day the Assembly was invaded, and Robespierre demanded the arrest of the Girondins, which was carried out a few days later. The Terror was beginning, yet the people continued to celebrate its religious festivals according to the Christian rites of centuries.

The *philosophes* rivalled the clergy also by stimulating with their writings and speeches that marvellous outburst of philanthropic activity which entitles the frivolous eighteenth century to admiration.

At the time many thought they saw the opening of a new era, with the appearance of so many institutions for the relief of poverty. The clergy, faithful to the traditions of centuries, devoted themselves, in the midst of the suffering of the times, to works of charity. But by the side of the priest, the *philosophe* raised his voice.

The Encyclopædists had brought the lay spirit into philosophy and literature, and now brought it into philanthropy. In place of the almsgiving, that humiliated the recipient, they demanded help, paid regularly and as a right.

M. Babeau says that the eighteenth century has been called the century of benevolence, when charity, inspired by the love of God, was reinforced by philanthropy inspired by the love of humanity. . . . The great movement, which gave the human spirit a fresh orientation by opening out to it horizons less distant than those of another life, made itself felt in public and private relief works as in other things; the movement that had begun in the sixteenth century, when the secular administration of buildings for public relief was transferred from clerical to lay hands, continued and culminated under the influence of the *philosophes*.

The Abbé de Saint-Pierre declared good works to be a social duty, independent of religion. Moncrif said they should be considered as an investment, which always gives a return: a simple deduction from the *philosophes'* maxim that the welfare of the individual was always bound up with the general welfare. The Encyclopædists wished to supersede religious morality by

this social morality. "The degree of moral virtue is measured by the sacrifice made for the community," said Duclos. Hence the duty of philanthropy. The theory may be disputed, but it must be admitted there was some generosity in asserting it when the interest of the individual seemed in perpetual conflict with the general interest. Duclos was one of those who noted the fierceness of the fight for existence and the triumph of the doctrine of success. To consider life as a game at chess that one must win even by cheating, such is the right attitude for the conqueror; to admit that one has lost by one's own fault, to blame oneself and not the winner, such is the right attitude for the vanquished. The struggle for life is the cause of and excuse for the loss of those moral virtues which tend to the good of man and society.

But the sight of this egoism does not lessen the writer's faith in the identity of interest of the individual and society; he considers this a self-evident truth which it is dangerous to submit to debate. The *philosophes* asserted finely, although perhaps rashly, that man must work for the happiness of others in order to be happy himself and that philanthropy was the highest self-interest. Hence the introduction of the secular spirit into the work of relief. Writers distinguished benevolence from charity. Mercier, rejoicing like his contemporaries over the money given away in "benevolence and charity," points out how much was due to the "writings urging the exercise of benevolence as the foundation of other virtues," and how much is due to the word *humanity*, a favourite one with the *philosophes*.

The poor who profited by it must have been grateful. The new spirit in charitable institutions is exemplified in a print, reproduced in M. Babeau's book, *Paris en* 1789. It shows a hospital ward with a statue of *Benevolence* in the midst of the beds of the patients; a man at the foot of the statue renders homage to the goddess, patron of the sick. No doubt, behind the bed curtains was a crucifix or else an image of the Virgin, but in the centre, in the place of honour, philanthropy is enthroned, symbolising the religion of humanity.

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THE people of France were to reward the *philosophes* one day for so many benefits; contemporary letters and memoirs give some idea of the indescribable enthusiasm with which Voltaire's visit to the capital was celebrated. The Comte de Ségur wrote:

> Voltaire, the prince of poets, the patriarch of the *philosophes*, the glory of his century and of France, had been an exile for many years. *The whole of France read his writings with rapture* and hardly anyone had seen him. To him his contemporaries were in a sense posterity.
>
> Admiration for his universal genius amounted with many to adoration; *his writings adorned all libraries*; his spirit was in everyone's mind, and his features unknown. His mind dominated all the minds of his day.

De Ségur adds further on: "The power of the *philosophes* was increased by the presence and triumph of their leader." The triumph of Voltaire was the triumph of the school of thought of the *philosophes*. Amongst the tumultuous and admiring throngs which crowded to acclaim Voltaire, and which transformed the reception of a simple mortal into the "apotheosis of a demigod," there was no mind that had not been more or less completely and consciously formed by the patriarch and the members of his Church. In front of "that *hôtel* on the Quai des Theatins, which resounded all day long with the cries and acclamations of an idolising crowd," triumph followed on triumph, the result of public enthusiasm which braved the power of magistrates, the thunders of the Church and the authority of the Monarch.

> In his house, which his presence seemed to transform into a palace, his court was composed of the boldest and most celebrated writers of the century, the most distinguished men of all classes and of all countries. . . . He was crowned in the Palace of the Tuileries, in the hall of the *Théâtre-Français*.
>
> It is impossible to depict the intoxicating reception given to this old man by the public which overflowed all the seats, boxes and corridors. The gratitude of a nation has never at any time been so overwhelmingly expressed.

It was indeed the entire nation which gave magnificent expression to its gratitude to the greatest of the *philosophes*, and we have here indisputable proof that the *philosophes* had moulded the nation and made it intellectually and morally what it was on the eve of the Revolution.

What would have been Voltaire's feeling towards this same people, whom he asked whether they wished him to die of joy, if he had seen its actions between 1789 and 1793? According to Sainte-Beuve, he would have said: "Here they are, just the same as ever, my *Welches*.[1]" According to Brunetière, the very notion of coming events would have made him shudder with disgust and horror. I think he would have been more surprised than Sainte-Beuve supposed and less terrified than Brunetière maintains. He would have been nonplussed, after reiterating that philosophy had made men reasonable and therefore gentler. His illusions were shared by Marmontel and the brethren, and, generally speaking, by all his contemporaries. On the very eve of the Revolution he vaunted the mildness of the people:

> No doubt the Huguenots have been intoxicated with fanaticism and stained with blood like us, but is the present generation as barbarous as its fathers? . . . In the last fifty years the whole face of Europe has changed. Philosophy, and philosophy alone, the sister of religion, has disarmed the hands so long blood-stained with superstition, and the human spirit waking from its drunkenness is astonished at the excesses into which fanaticism had led it.

The whole world had been cured of all fanaticism, the future would break away from the past without trouble or shock.

One day Abeille, the friend of Duclos, was with the Intendant of Paris, who held forth at great length on the dangers of liberty, and made terrifying predictions of popular revolts: "Do not be frightened," said Abeille, "none of those things will happen."

Abeille's quiet assurance would have been repeated by Voltaire with eloquence, and he would have been duly disappointed had he seen the drama of '93. Would he have been terrified? Perhaps his far-seeing mind would have recognised it as a sort of logical outcome of his own work and of that of his collaborators. He would certainly not have admitted it, but would have done like those of his friends who suffered in the Terror and who vainly tried to show that philosophy had

[1] *Welches* = Barbarians or Philistinès.

nothing to do with the tragedy then being played before their eyes. At bottom he would have felt that the Encyclopædists had trained these actors, taught them their parts, dictated their words if not their gestures, and if he would not have gone as far as Brunetière in admitting that "the drama developed from act to act according to the scenario drawn up by the *philosophes*," he would have admitted in his inmost soul that it was they who had written the prologue and settled the first scenes, and that the action was bound to develop to its final *dénouement*.

But we have more to go on than conjecture as to the attitude of the Encyclopædists in general to the years following 1789.

The Abbé Morellet, for instance, and Marmontel were affected in a sensitive place—their pockets! Both feared, when the Revolution broke out, political disorder and an attack on capital. The Abbé wrote to Lord Shelburne: "We have started the most dangerous of all wars, that of the poor against the rich; the needy have force on their side, those who have anything to lose are weak." He repeats the idea put forward by the *philosophes* that a large population is incapable of taking part in the government, and he displays the resentment of a *rentier* who sees his income considerably reduced and foresees a further reduction. Morellet was to show himself hostile to any popular revolution and later on, in 1796, he undertook to clear philosophy of the reproach of having caused the Revolution.

Certainly his *Apologie* is not unskilful:

> The *philosophes* never wished to do all that has been done, nor to carry it out by the methods that have been used, nor to achieve it in so short a time. In other words, philosophy neither counselled the iniquities and extravagances that have been associated with the cause of liberty, nor wished to call in savage and ignorant people to make a constitution, nor to make just and necessary changes with a precipitancy that neglects all prudent precautions.

But he reproached the innovators with having weakened authority by abolishing the nobility and the old magistracy, who both acted as a useful check on the people; the latter might have replied that it was following the lines traced by the Encyclopædists.

Morellet continues:

As to the support lent by religious opinion to public order, it is only too clear that it has been destroyed by all the violence practised on the priests, violence which the constitution ought to have foreseen as a consequence of the treatment meted out to the clergy, and of the tendency of a people which had been left with no means of control. . . .

Philosophy told men that when the country was in danger every citizen was a soldier . . . but it did not propose to arm suddenly three or four millions by crying out liberty . . . or without reserving some means of taking away from the people such a terrible force, which it was likely to abuse.

I do not know when or where the *philosophes* ever suggested such means; on the contrary I find that d'Holbach expressed a principle which had to be accepted or rejected with all its consequences: "The nations of the ancient world were more free than those of to-day because they were armed."

Marmontel's feelings were similar as he watched the irresistible logic of events. He made the following announcement in that part of his *Memoirs* which covered the period of the Revolution:

I am not writing the history of the Revolution . . . but if man's life is a journey, can I relate mine without saying what torrents and abysses, what jungles infested with tigers and serpents it has passed through?

He writes with greater fairness than Morellet:

In the case of a frivolous and petulant nation which has suddenly demanded freedom before being prepared for it, it is only too natural that its first ardour should have carried it beyond the limits of freedom into the region of passion, error and crime. . . . It is just possible that some men with the natures of tigers should have planned the Revolution in its actual form, but I believe no one would maintain that the French nation, even the lower classes, before they became demoralised, would have consented to such a barbarous and impious plot.

Marmontel was right in claiming that the various scenes of the drama had not been foreseen, but he himself had helped to sketch out the general scheme. In one passage of his *Memoirs* Marmontel describes a conversation with Chamfort, who later on was one of the worst victims of the Revolution, and ended by cutting his own throat. Marmontel adopts here the rôle of Pascal in his *Provinciales* and undertakes to elicit Chamfort's

most secret thoughts. In spite of this pose, which detracts from its value, the passage is interesting:

"The nation," declared Chamfort, "is a flock that only wants to feed and that can be easily led by the shepherds and their dogs. After all, the aim in view is the people's welfare, and neither your old regime, nor your religion, nor morality, nor all your outworn prejudices deserve to be spared; they are all a disgrace to the century, and to draw up a new plan it is right to make a clean sweep." "A clean sweep," I objected; "but the throne and the altar?" "The throne and the altar," he said, "will fall together; they are two flying buttresses leaning one on the other; when one is broken, the other will collapse."

Times were indeed changed when the author of *Bélisaire* feared for throne and altar. He had once thought he could shake the one without the other, but the *philosophes* had unwittingly undermined both, and the people destroyed both. Chamfort was right and Marmontel wrong.

Morellet's apology was skilful but false; the argument he relied on and insisted on was the following:

The people, immersed in toil, cannot read, and has no time nor wish to read. No metaphysical works, however eloquent, could have led this great mass to the terrible movement of the past three years; it needed other levers, not books but words: liberty, tyranny, despotism, slavery, court lackey, soldiers of *la patrie*, parson, aristocrat, dungeon of the Bastille, and other more powerful motives, money and ambition.

It was sophistry to pretend that the people were led by "words." They associated with this revolutionary phraseology the ideas of the *philosophes*.

Morellet continued:

The writings of the *philosophes* are accused of having led to the Revolution and its excesses, but from the nature of the case the effect of books and writings is slow . . . because many years are needed before a book capable of influencing the political condition of a people can be disseminated, read and discussed. . . . Ninety-nine people out of a hundred are absolutely incapable of being moved in any way by reading philosophic works or politics. . . .

It is clear that people might have been writing against the priests, as Voltaire did, for fifty or a hundred years, without bringing about the formidable changes we have witnessed. No. The writings of the *philosophes*, not being read, nor being within reach of the multitude, could not have produced such great effects.

An amusing claim, this, that Voltaire's anti-religious propaganda had produced so little effect, and how absurd to deny

that the *philosophes* had endeavoured to bring the writings, which they spread throughout the nation, within the reach of the multitude, or that Voltaire had taught his disciples to "enlighten the shoemaker as well as the chancellor."

But Morellet himself contradicts his own apology; he had formerly written: "The effect of public writing about the administration is to turn conversation to matters of political economy." At that time, in 1764, he declared that it was for the *philosophes* to keep the public in a happy state of ferment, which should be followed by lasting reforms:

> In order to secure that principles become well established, they should be embraced after discussion, and *consecrated by public opinion*. Then alone will they attain consistency, just as spirituous liquors after fermentation mature and keep for a long period. When the public, taught by writings and discussions, has adopted a truth, it guards it faithfully.

If the *philosophes* were responsible for the fermentation, were they not also for the explosion? Did they wish to limit their liability to the cause and escape the consequence?

If they did not foresee the consequence, that proves nothing; it certainly does not prove that Morellet had a right to repudiate responsibility for the Revolution which he had prepared. . . . It may be objected that for him public opinion meant that of the cultivated classes—that will not hold water! He speaks of "a nation educated to its own interests." The word has a much more general application; it was the people whom the *philosophe* addressed:

> There is a country where no accurate census can be taken because the people is convinced that its object is to increase taxation. This prejudice and a thousand more are obstacles to progress; it is the task of writers to destroy prejudice.

Evidently they destroyed them in the public mind; Morellet had forgotten his speech to the Academy, 16th June 1785:

> The lot of a solitary man of letters has the compensating advantage that he is occupied with great and useful objects, and can flatter himself that his work will have a salutary influence on the people's happiness. Although himself powerless, he can defend men's rights; without authority he reforms abuses, without holding office he improves legislation, and in the hope that a better day will dawn for humanity *he is proud to think that he has shared in this slow and desirable revolution.*

At that moment Morellet believed, like everyone, in a slow revolution, but because it was sudden, was he entitled to claim that he had had no share in it?

* * * * * * * *

MORELLET was much fairer when he wrote in his *Apologie*:

It will be said perhaps that it was the *philosophes* who taught people to reason on politics, that it was in their writings that people learnt to use those words whose power has been so terrible. At anyrate, they opened the road on which the people went astray; it is therefore fair to blame them. I reply that if this reproach is fair, those who make it should go still further back. Why do they not curse the first inventor of letters, or, at least, of printing? For it is certainly truer that without them progress would have been retarded for a number of centuries.

Yes, it would have been logical to blame those who were the first to enlighten humanity; it was the great law of progress, proclaimed by the *philosophes*, which led the people towards liberty through the tempest and fury of the Revolution. The *philosophes* were in the direct line of succession and fertilised the seeds sown by their predecessors. "We admit," wrote Brunetière, "that it may be necessary to go back to the past long before the *philosophes* to explain the Revolution, but can it be claimed that it would have been carried out without them, especially in the way it was carried out?" If Morellet admits that philosophy has taught the people their political wrongs and the vices of their Government and shown the means of curing them, "that it has shown the malady and indicated the cure," we will allow that it cannot be blamed if the treatment was applied too early, or mistakenly, but we do not admit Morellet's right to deprive the Encyclopædists of the honour of having made '89, if they did not make '93. The question is whether or not '93 was the last act, fatal and logical, of the drama of '89.

Morellet finishes his *Apologie* with much too vague a definition of philosophy:

I will only say that as philosophy is the search for truth, it can do no harm, for nature and truth always agree; man can only be happy by conforming to nature, which is stronger than his systems and opinions.

Such prudent definitions, found also in Voltaire, who uses the term "philosophy" as being synonymous with "reason,"

are all very well for Fontenelle, but inadequate from the Encyclopædists. Philosophy was active reason, applied when truth and nature not only did not agree, but where the disagreement between reality and good sense was crying, and where there was everywhere abuse, injustice and shocking inequality.

Philosophy had an active effect on all the nation, even on the classes that did not read. The article in the *Encyclopédie* on the *Esprit Philosophique* contained these lines:

> It is enough for a nation if certain great geniuses have the philosophic spirit to a high degree and if their superior learning makes them the arbiters of taste, the oracles of criticism and the dispensers of literary glory. *The philosophic spirit*, shown so brilliantly by a small group, *will spread its influence throughout the State, throughout all creations of brain or hand*, and especially throughout literature.

Here is a clear refutation of all Morellet's specious arguments. We may say that Voltaire would have been disillusioned, but perhaps he would have reread the letter addressed to him by Linguet, in February 1767, wherein popular education was treated of, and wherein, after drawing a distinction between the thinking and unthinking classes, the writer added:

> If it were possible to enlighten only one of these two sections of the human race, if it were possible to intercept all the light transmitted from the smaller section to the larger, and to keep in perpetual darkness those whose usefulness and docility depend on being kept in darkness, then I should approve the work of the *philosophes*, but consider, Sir, if the sun rises on the former class, dawn will reach to the second, however distant the day may be.

It is probable that Voltaire would have talked like Marmontel and Morellet, but it is certain that he would have thought that Linguet had been correct in his forecast.

CONCLUSION

We may be permitted to give with some confidence our answer to the question raised at the beginning of this book. The influence of the *philosophes* upon the course of the whole of the eighteenth century was real and decisive: they brought about the French Revolution. We have seen in what fashion and to what extent.

They were powerfully aided in their task by contemporary political events, and it is indubitable that their campaign would have been fruitless without the immense help of circumstances which contributed to its triumph. The very idea of the campaign, indeed, the main lines of their operations, and even the details of the tactics adopted—all these things were in a sense the outcome of the actions of those against whom they fought. As Brunetière has happily expressed it: it was not they who had created "that conglomeration of disturbance and sedition" out of which the Revolution was to take shape. It was not their doing that France had been in the hands of a Sovereign who, after evoking the most enthusiastic hopes, had ended his reign in shame and scorn, leaving behind him as successor a weak-willed man of mediocre attainments; it was not their doing that the country had been ruled by royal mistresses who, in one way or another, had helped to precipitate the fall of the monarchy; or that its noble class were destitute of their former power and made up of Court sycophants, without morals and without honour, or else of short-sighted and ineffective military heroes; or that its magistrates, preoccupied with their own privileges and inimical to the new spirit, were tainted also with fanatical Jansenism and moreover were not able to withstand the despotism of the King. It was not owing to the *philosophes* that the financiers had become more and more powerful and had encroached so deeply upon the preserves of the old nobility, dominating later over the newer nobles as well; it was not the *philosophes* who had initiated those fashionable *salons* which were such a power in the hands of the ambitious. As for the bourgeois and the proletariat, we have seen what were

the conditions that predisposed them to hearken to the reformers.

I am prepared to admit that among the ideas championed by the Encyclopædists there were a great many which they merely inherited from preceding centuries: the ideas of toleration and of free thought, for instance; of equality before the law; of individual liberty; and also that idea of the unrestricted progress of humanity which was the basis of their faith. And while I can point, on the other hand, to a certain number of other ideas which they made entirely new, either by the way in which they defined their outlines or extracted from them the practical and fruitful results that no previous thinkers had foreseen or ventured to envisage, I am ready to go so far as to acknowledge that there was nothing new in the articles of the Encyclopædists' programme. The eighteenth century, if you like, was a century of propaganda, but it was a century of action rather than of speculation.

But was not this propaganda indispensable? Would the Revolution have been practicable if the Encyclopædists' ideas had not passed from the domain of speculation to that of action? Who was it that gave "a form" to this muddled business of riots and grievances? Who was it that, in the face of the imperfections of the *ancien régime*—grown to look more scandalous with the progress of reason—established the principles of a rational constitution of society, based upon the liberty of the citizen and aiming at the welfare of men freed from the disquieting menaces of despotism and the still more terrible menaces of destitution? Who but the Encyclopædists?

We have shown how they requisitioned the help of all classes of the nation. They could not, indeed, secure the support of Louis XV. but they obtained his neutrality and, glad not to see their enemy the Dauphin reigning over them, they profited by the indolence of the Sovereign. They benefited from the favour and protection of Madame de Pompadour; they turned to good account the general discontent evoked by Madame du Barry. Among the great they found invaluable allies, while denouncing a class which still enjoyed privileges that were in

most cases justified no longer by services or virtues, political or moral. The *parlementaires* provided them also with allies of first importance, and while the *philosophes* combated these in the name of the new ideas, they profited by their efforts against the Jesuits and by the lassitude induced by the religious contests in which the magistrates took the principal rôle. The financiers gave them the support of a new and mighty power —a power which, despite prejudices that the Encyclopædists had a share in removing, was about to take a foremost rank in social affairs. In most of the *salons* the *philosophes* acquired the upper hand, radiating thence their influence over the cultured world at home and abroad; in the same way they captured the bourgeoisie, which, moulded by them, without losing its general characteristics, was led gradually into accepting principles it had previously viewed with distrust. And finally they won over the masses by dint of generous demands on their behalf, made in a simple and striking fashion. They gave to the masses not so much a dogma as elementary ideas on politics and administration, and set them dreaming of a regime under which all the privileges would not be for the rich and all the burdens for the poor and unfortunate.

That is what we have made clear in the preceding chapters, tracing the development of events in broad outline.

It is possible that our outline needs to be filled in with additional details, and that some of those given may clash with the views of this writer or that, with this page or that from the great mass of eighteenth-century literature. Such clashings, as it seems to me, do not detract from the essential truth of our general impression, taken from that source. I have remarked that the army of the Encyclopædia had a plan of campaign the vast design of which we can follow at a distance. In a vanguard skirmish or in a rearguard battle the tactics employed may sometimes have varied, different weapons may at times have been called into use: all that I admit. I admit, too, the existence by the side of the regular forces of irregular troops, bold and daring auxiliaries fighting shoulder to shoulder with men of more prudent and cautious temperament. But,

taking them on the whole, the *philosophes* maintained, I think, the attitude which has been described. . . .

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WE have overlooked the fact, on the other hand, that the *philosophes* were far from imagining that the revolution which they were preparing would break out so soon and that it would follow along the lines of a scenario which they had not drawn up in advance. These words written by Duclos about 1750 have often been cited:

> I do not know whether I have too good an opinion of my century but it seems to me that there is a certain fermentation of mind everywhere in progress which tends to develop, *which perhaps will be allowed to spend itself*, and the course of which might be safeguarded, guided and hastened by a well-conceived form of education.

The phrase italicised by me shows that Duclos did not foresee even indistinctly the ultimate explosion which was to follow upon this fermentation. All that is to be found in his remark is the legitimate pride of the *philosophe*, convinced that the new doctrines, if properly turned to account, would ensure the welfare of all.

Some sixteen years later we find the Encyclopædists taking a different tone. They still do not foresee the impending explosion, but they are convinced now that the fermentation will not be suffered to "spread itself." Voltaire writes thus to the Prince de Galitzin:

> During the last fifteen years there has taken place a revolution in the minds of men which will produce a great epoch. The cries of the pedants herald this great change as the croakings of the ravens herald good weather.

That was written in 1767. The revolution would come in ten years' time, Voltaire went on to declare, if there were "a thousand reasonable men" alive. He continued:

> A man of my age will not see it but we will die in the hope that men may become more enlightened and more gentle. . . . The world is having its wits sharpened tremendously. . . . What will console me when I leave the world is that I shall leave behind me a little nursery-garden of honest folk which is growing and gathering strength every day and which will end by forcing the fools and fanatics to hold their tongues. I shall not see those beautiful days but I see their dawning.

And here is another characteristic passage:

I shall die with the three theological virtues, in which I find my consolation: faith, which I have in human reason, which begins to be developed in the world; hope, that bold and wise Ministers will do away with usages which are as ridiculous as they are dangerous; and charity, which makes me groan over my neighbour, pity his chains and wish for his deliverance; thus with faith, hope and charity I finish my life like a good Christian.

And when Turgot comes to power, Voltaire writes to him:

You are bringing to birth a beautiful century of which I shall see only the earliest dawn. I foresee great changes, and France stands in need of every one of them.

A pacific revolution, the honour and glory of which would belong to the *philosophes*, and the merit of executing which should be reserved to their pupils, now risen to be Ministers —such was the dream of Voltaire. What does it signify if some years earlier, in 1764, he is to be found expressing himself, just once, in a different strain?

The French arrive late for everything [he wrote], but they do arrive. The light has been so spread that the explosion will come soon and then there will be a great upheaval. The young are very fortunate; they will see some fine things.

As he himself has told us, Voltaire, according to circumstances, could be either Heraclitus or Democritus. If on this one occasion he played the part of Heraclitus, it does not follow that he had vision enough to foretell the real nature of the fine row. And we are assuredly entitled to say that the Revolution, while prepared by the *philosophes*, went singularly beyond anything of which they dreamed.

But this must not prevent us from maintaining that they were, in great measure, its authors. If we want further evidence of the fact why not address ourselves to the persons most concerned?

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LET us then see whether the men of the Revolution believed themselves indebted to the *philosophes* for the great changes which had taken place. I might go first to the *Gazette Nationale* (*Le Moniteur Universal*) and take the record of the sittings of the revolutionary Assemblies at which Rousseau was glorified. This would show how the men who made France anew paid their tribute to Jean-Jacques, affirming that this beneficent

rebirth—*cette régéneration salutaire*—the benefits of which they were celebrating, was his achievement, and how the people associated itself with the apotheosis of the great writer whose ashes were being consigned in solemn state to the Panthéon. I prefer, however, to take from the same source the account of the honour done by the men of 1789 to him who was the incarnation of the new thought of the eighteenth century, to Voltaire, and, having already noted the enthusiastic reception given to the Patriarch of Ferney in 1778, to tell of the triumphant demonstration organised to his memory by the people in 1791.

At the sitting of Sunday, 8th May 1791, Regnaud proposed that it should be decreed that the remains of Voltaire be transferred from the church at Sellières to that at Romilly, pending a formal decision by the National Assembly as to the disposal of them. Lanjuinais,[1] having recalled the saying of Bayle, that "Voltaire deserves the thanks but not the esteem of the human race," and having proposed that the Assembly should pass to the order of the day, Freilhard spoke as follows:

> I will remind you that Voltaire in 1764, in a private letter which he wrote, foretold this revolution of which we are witnesses: he foretold it just as we see it: he felt that it might be delayed awhile, that his eyes would not be witnesses of it, but that the children of that generation would benefit by it to the full. Therefore it is to him that we owe it: and he is, perhaps, one of the foremost among those to whom we owe the honours which you are proposing to confer upon the great men who have deserved well of the Country.
>
> I do not speak here of Voltaire's conduct as a private individual; that he should have honoured the human race, that he should be the author of a revolution so beautiful and so great as ours, is sufficient reason for us to hasten to render to him as speedily as possible the honours which are his due.

The Assembly accepted Regnaud's motion at once.

On 30th May 1791 Gossin went up into the tribune to propose that the National Assembly, after having heard the report of its Constitutional Committee, should decree that Voltaire's remains should be transferred from the church at Romilly to that of St Geneviève in Paris. It was the anniversary of the day when the honours of burial had been denied

[1] Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, *b.* 1753, *d.* 1827, President of the Convention in 1795.

to Voltaire. "The French, become free men," declared Gossin, "will award to the liberator of thought the honour due from them to one of the founders of their liberty." Regnaud then rose again and gave forth some eloquent words. It was not, he declared, to the incomparable talents of "the *philosophe* of Ferney" that the representations of France owed extraordinary honours:

I demand them [he cried] for the *philosophe* who was one of the first to dare to speak to the masses of their rights, of their dignity, of their power, in the midst of a corrupt Court. Voltaire, one of whose weaknesses it was to be a courtier, addressed to the courtiers the austere language of truth. . . . His penetrating vision read into the future and saw the dawn of freedom, of that regeneration of France the seeds of which he sowed with equal zeal and courage. He knew that if a race was to become free it was necessary that it should cease to be ignorant.

And his listeners exhibiting their anxiety to proceed to the taking of a vote, he concluded: "I shall not stand in the way of the impatience of the Assembly. My amendment doubtless does not need to be moved formally; I make the simple announcement: there shall be raised a statue to Voltaire at the cost of the nation."

It was decided that Voltaire's remains should be brought back to Paris on 4th July and the necessary arrangements were proceeded with. The date was then postponed until the 10th. On the 9th the Assembly decided to send a deputation of twelve of its members to the celebrations in Voltaire's honour. The scene of the celebration was thus described:

A platform was erected on the spot upon which had stood formerly the tower where Voltaire was incarcerated. His coffin, before being deposited upon it, was shown to the innumerable crowd of spectators, and what had been a religious silence was succeeded by the most animated acclamations. The entire site of the Bastille was covered by artificial groves and plots of verdure. Out of the ruins of the fortress had been constructed a high structure of stones, all round which were to be seen designs of a symbolical and allegorical nature. Upon one of the stones were inscribed the words:

"*Reçois en ce lieu où t'enchaina le despotisme, Voltaire, les honneurs que te rend la patrie!*"[1]

On the following day, Monday, the 11th of July, the whole of Paris escorted Voltaire's body to the Panthéon. In the

[1] "Accept, Voltaire, at this spot, where Despotism made thee a prisoner, the honours which are rendered to thee by the fatherland!"

enormous concourse of deputations and delegations there were to be seen the workers who had demolished the Bastille and the citizens of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine who captured it. In the midst of acclamations the chariot advanced slowly, carrying the sarcophagus which contained the coffin. The whole was surmounted by a figure of Voltaire lying at full length, a figure of Fame placing a crown upon his head. The sarcophagus was inscribed with the words:

"*Il vengea Calas, la Barre, Servan et Montbailly. Poète, philosophe, historien, il a fait prendre un grand essor à l'esprit humain et nous a préparés à devenir libres.*" [1]

Twelve horses, greyish white in colour, drew the chariot, led by men attired in classical garb.

But what lent real significance to this grandiose demonstration was the fervour of the public. In front of the Maison de la Villette, wherein the Patriarch's heart was preserved, an arch had been constructed out of four poplars linked together by garlands of oak leaves with, beneath the verdant vault, a crown of roses, which was lowered upon the chariot as it passed underneath. Attached to it was a scroll containing the words: "*Son esprit est partout et con cœur est ici.*" [2] At no great distance from this archway rose an amphitheatre "filled with young *citoyennes* dressed in white, garlands of roses on their heads, wearing blue girdles and carrying civic crowns in their hands." Suddenly there was the sound of music and of singing—the words of Chénier and Gossec went forth:

Ton souffle createur nous fit ce que nous sommes,
Reçois le libre encens de la France à genoux.[3]

When Madame Villette and members of the Calas family took their place in the procession, the emotion of the onlookers knew no bounds and there were tears in all eyes.

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[1] "He avenged Calas, la Barre, Servan and Montbailly. Poet, philosopher, historian, he has stimulated human thought to a great flight and has made us ready for freedom."

[2] "His mind is everywhere and his heart is here."

[3] "Thy creative breath made us what we are,
Accept the freely accorded homage of France kneeling before thee."

This ceremony [said the *Moniteur*] was a real national festival. Everywhere were to be seen inscribed the best-known maxims from his immortal works; they were on the lips of everyone.

Later, indeed, there were protests against this great apotheosis of Voltaire. When, in May 1896, Chénier urged that similar honours should be paid to the memory of Descartes, Mercier opposed the proposal and took occasion to attack the *philosophes* in general and Voltaire in particular. Here is an extract from the official report of the debate in the National Assembly:

HARDY. Voltaire has just been belittled and decried and yet it is beyond question that Voltaire was one of the founders of the Republic. . . . (Protesting murmurs).

DOULCET. I claim priority for Rousseau!

SEVERAL MEMBERS. And I also!

HARDY. I maintain that Voltaire's writings cut the claws[1] of superstition and fanaticism in many countries and that but for them the whole of France might have gone the way of the Chouans[2] (the speaker was interrupted by loud peals of laughter)—let me explain: Voltaire enlightened all classes of the people. In order to make himself understood by them he made use of the kind of language fitted for the purpose. The works of the profound *philosophes* are not within the range of everybody; Voltaire wrote for the light-minded and the superficial and he succeeded in enlightening them.

It seems certain that Voltaire's associates would in due course have been accorded public honours in their turn by revolutionary France had the circumstances of the time allowed. . . . At that same sitting of the Assembly, it was proposed to erect statues to Rousseau and to Montesquieu, and Voltaire's saying about the latter—"*Le genre humain avait perdu ses titres, Montesquieu les a rétrouvés*,"[3]—was recalled to mind. . . . If the First Republic was not able to pay even its most pressing debts, those to Voltaire and Rousseau, at least it proclaimed them frankly.

* * * * * * * *

THE *philosophes*, then, were recognised by men of the First Republic as the initiators and authors of the Revolution. The

[1] *Ont désarmé* in the French.

[2] The Royalist insurgents in Brittany in 1792 and 1794.

[3] "The human race had lost its title-deeds, Montesquieu found them again."

men of the Third Republic are of the same mind. The people who are grudging in their acknowledgments are those who have accepted their inheritance unwillingly or those who, on reckoning up its results, regret having accepted it. As for ourselves, we shall continue to acclaim in the *philosophes* the godfathers of the world of to-day and, in spite of momentary troubles and transient despondencies, we shall continue to declare that if they disowned their sons and their sons' methods they would not disown the efforts of their great-grandsons to achieve social and political progress along the lines of Reason and of Liberty.

INDEX

Abbeville, 132
Abeille, —, 280
Académie Française, 40, 41, 85, 146, 160, 178 *sqq.*, 194
Académie des Sciences, 94
Adelaide de France, Madame, 97
Adine, —, 146, 160
Aguesseau, —, d', 226
Aiguillon, Duc d', 41, 49, 99
Aissé, Mlle, 48
Aix, 93, 129, 138
Aix-la-Chapelle, Peace of, 37, 38, 39, 44
Alembert, —, d', 94, 131, 133, 140, 180, 185, 194, 218, 222-3, 250-1, 263, 264, 271
Alpes Briançonnaises, 244
Alsace, 34, 35, 76
Amiens, 232
Angerville, Mouffle d', 50, 57, 72, 79, 92
Angoumois, the, 245
Anquetil, —, 113
Antwerp, 37
Arcq, Chevalier d', 156
Argenson, Marquis d', 27-8, 32, 39, 50, 63-4, 66-7, 69, 72-3, 77, 84, 104, 111, 112, 114, 130, 139, 178, 234, 236, 260
Argental, Mme d', 138
Armenonville, 202
Arnaud, —, 179, 192, 215
Artois, 238
Aubertin, M., 30, 44
Aubreuil, Rolland de, 149
Auch, 244
Audra, Abbé, 134
Augny, Étienne de, 146, 157
Augustus II. of Poland, 37, 144
Autun, Marbœuf, Bishop of, 262
Auvergne, 105
Averdy, —, de l', 146, 181
Ayen, —, d', 85

Babeau, M., 242 *sqq.*, 252, 277, 278
Bachaumont, —, 94, 260
Bacon, Lord, 266
Bacquencourt, Dupleix de, 146, 150
Barante, —, de, 265
Barbier, A. A., 71, 83, 102, 125, 197 *sqq.*, 229
Barni, —, 41-2, 43, 81, 138
Barre, Chevalier de la, 132, 137
Barry, Mme du, 70, 71, 94 *sqq.*, 288
Bar-sur-Aube, 252
Barthès, —, 159
Bastille, the, 65, 82, 125, 247, 263, 276, 294
Baudeau, Abbé, 48
Baurecueil, Laugier de, 201
Bavaria, 45
Bayle, —, 198, 272
Béarn, 245
Beaufort, —, de, 146, 148, 152
Beaumarchais, —, 184
Beaumont, —, d'Éon de, 154
Beauvau, Maréchal de, 44, 45
Bécu, Anne, 94, 95, 150
— Jeanne (Barry, Mme du, *q.v.*)
Belgium, 38
Belle-Isle, Maréchal de, 110
Benedict XIV., Pope, 49
Bergeret, —, 146, 148, 159
Berg-op-Zoom, 38
Bernard, Samuel, 148, 161, 163, 165, 168
Bernis, Cardinal de, 88, 89, 91, 99
Besançon, 120, 138
Besenval, Baron de, 114
Beuchot, —, 137
Beuvron, —, de, 189
Bissy, M. de, 179
Blanc, Abbé Le, 85, 86
Blois, 240
Boesnier, 162
Boileau, —, 198, 245
Boismont, Abbé de, 178, 179
Bolingbroke, Lord, 195
Bonaparte, Lieut., 232
Bonzi, Cardinal de, 147
Borde, M. de la, 100, 146, 148, 153, 159
Bordeaux, 41, 120, 134
Bossuet, —, 191
Boufflers, Mme, 179
Bouillé, Marquis de, 102
Boulainvilliers, Comte de, 104, 105
Boullanger, —, 159
Bourbon, Duc de, 33
Bouret, —, 145, 164
Bourgoyne, Duc de, 103
Brancas, Mme de, 57, 179
Brécé, Duc Jean de, 113, 114
Bretonne, Restif de la, 246
Brignole, Mme de, 158
Brionne, Comte de, 83
Brissard, —, 146, 157
Brittany, 102, 238
Broglie, Comte de, 46, 58, 195
Brunel, —, 52, 264
Brunetière, F., 177, 182, 188, 197-8, 220, 245, 250, 280, 281, 285, 287
Brunswick, Hereditary Prince of, 159

Brussels, 37
Buffon, —, de, 81, 158, 191, 192, 219, 266
Bussy, —, 189, 190
Buvat, Jean, 198, 209

Caen, Academy of, 261, 262
Calas family, 294
Calas, Jean, 132, 137
Calonne, —, 181
Camuset, —, 146
Cap Breton Island, 38
Caraccioli, —, 245
Carnet, M. de, 135-6
Carré, M., 46, 55, 82, 86, 119, 138, 153
Castilhon, —, de, 123
Caze, —, 146, 157
Chabanne, Rochon de, 111
Chablis, 125
Chambon, —, 145
Chamfort, —, 114, 178, 181, 282-3
Chamillard, M., 157, 210
Charleroi, 37
Charles VI., Emperor, 32, 34
Charles VII., 76, 95
Charles X., 113
Charolais, Comte de, 73
Chastellux, —, 179
Châteauroux, Duchesse de, 36, 71, 75 *sqq.*, 82, 88
Châtillon, Duc de, 37
Chaulnes, Duchesse de, 178
Chaussée, Nivelle de la, 166
Chénier, André, 295
Chesterfield, Lord, 195
Chouans, the, 295
Choiseul, Duc de, 80, 89, 90, 93, 94, 97 *sqq.*, 100, 134, 137, 195
Choisy, 85
Christian Brothers, the, 243
Cicé, Boisgelin de, 179
Clapiers, Luc de, *see* Vauvenargues
Clement XIII., Pope, 129
Clement XIV., Pope, 98
Clermont, Comte de, 73
Coffin, M., 126
Colbert, —, 84, 146, 167, 210, 231
Colbert, Bishop of Montpellier, 212-13, 215
Collé, —, 81, 162
Condamine, La, 159
Condé, Prince de, 35, 167
Condillac, —, 113, 260
Condorcet, —, 100, 223
Conti, Prince Michael, 166, 214
Corbi, Mme, 138
Corneille, — 159
Coulanges, M. de, 151
Coyer, Abbé, 102-3, 122, 187
Crébillon, *fils*, 163
— *père*, 81, 85, 158
Creutz, —, 195
Cromwell, Oliver, 255

Dalberg, Baron de, 159
Damilaville, —, 252-3, 269, 272
Damiens, 50, 53
Dampierre, 82
Dangé, —, 145, 150, 157, 166
Darcet, —, 159
Darigrand, M., 163
Dauphin, the, son of Louis XV., 37, 55 *sqq.*, 88, 89, 97, 99, 144, 288
Dauphine, Mme la, 56, 97; the second, 144
Dauphiny, 232
Deffand, Mme du, 90, 194, 260-1
Delille, —, 178
Descartes, —, 192, 219, 295
Desmarets, M., 210
Desnoireterres, M., 158
Desvieux, —, and his daughter, 146, 147
Diderot, —, 53, 58, 59, 60, 64, 134, 142, 219, 222, 225, 250, 251, 257 *sqq.*, 271-2, 275
Dombe, the, 236
Doulcet, —, 295
Duclos, —, 31-2, 42-3, 62-3, 80 *sqq. passim*, 93, 107 *sqq.*, 116, 121, 122, 155, 162, 165 *sqq.*, 192, 193, 230, 263, 265, 278, 290
Ducros, M., 222, 224-5
Dupaty, —, 123, 134, 135
Dupin, Claud, and his wife, 87, 146, 158, 160
Dupleix, —, Governor of Pondichéry, 150
Duras, Duc de, 85, 179

Economists, the, 260
Elbœuf, Duc d', 165
Encyclopædists, the, and the *Encyclopédie*, 52, 58, 78, 86, 88, 90 *sqq.*, 107 *sqq.*, 123, 128, 131 *sqq.*, 140, 183, 184, 194, 218, 220, 222 *sqq.*, 256 *sqq.*, 272, 277, 281 *sqq.*, 288, 290
Escobar, —, 130
Étioles, Mme d' (Mme de Pompadour, *q.v.*)
Étioles, M. d', 87, 159

Fare, Marquis de la, 166
Fénelon, Bishop of Cambrai, 38, 110, 262, 266
Fénelon, Marquis de, and his daughters, 147
Flammermont, M., 127, 136, 140
Flanders, 34, 36, 76

Flavacourt, Marquis de, and his wife, 75, 77
Fléchier, —, Bishop of Nîmes, 105
Fleury, Cardinal, 33, 34, 38, 49, 72, 74, 75, 149, 207
Fleury, Joly de, 139, 146, 148, 229
Foncemagne, —, 81
Fontenelle, M. de, 87, 158, 223, 224, 225, 226, 286
Fontenoy, Battle of, 37
Forcalquier, Comtesse de, 84, 158, 179, 195
Foucault, Intendant, 165
Fouquier-Tinville, 153
Fourmont, M. de, 158
France, Anatole, *cited*, 113-14, 250
Franceuil, Dupin de, 146, 150
Franche-Comté, 244
Frederick the Great, 64, 80, 140, 218, 224, 249, 252, 275
Freilhard, —, 292
Fréron, 15, 154, 160
Fresnoy, Marquise de, 189
Fuentes, Marquis de, 196

Galiani, Abbé, 195, 196
Galitzin, Prince de, 290
Garde, Delay de la, family, 145, 147
Garnier, Abbé, 264
Garnier, Germain, 260
Gascony, 244
Geneva, 255
Genoa, 38
Gentil-Bernard, 85
Geoffrin, Mme, 87, 88, 183, 193-4, 196, 226
George Sand, 150
George II., 38
Germany, 150
Gibbon, E., 159
Girondins, the, 277
Gisors, Comte de, 110
Gleichen, —, 196
Goncourt, the brothers de, 156
Gontaut, M. de, 144
Gossin, —, 293
Gourdan, —, 213
Gournay, —, de, 259, 260
Goussainville, —, 199, 200
Gouville, Mme de, 189
Gouville, —, de, 167
Grammont, Duchesse de, 95
Grapigny, Mme de, 258
Gresset, M., 150, 158
Greuze, —, 193-4
Grimm, Baron, 41, 135, 156-7, 158, 162 *sqq.*, 194, 195, 262, 263
Guasco, Comte de, 175
Guillois, M., 157
Guizot, —, 113
Guizy, —, de, 146, 153

Hardy, —, 97, 99, 139, 198-9, 205, 209, 214, 276, 293
Harvey, Lady, 158
Hauranne, Duvergier de la, 61
Hausset, Mme du, 29, 47, 52, 57, 58, 87, 144, 167
Héguerty, —, d', 160
Helvétius, C. A. (*fils*), 31, 59-60, 157-8, 160, 162, 191, 194, 260, 263
Helvétius (*père*), 31, 146
Hénault, —, 123, 148
Henri IV., 33, 68, 231
Holbach, Baron d', 59, 191, 194, 225, 248, 260, 263, 267
Hoop, —, 64-5
Horn, Count, 166
Hôtel Rambouillet, 182, 183, 191
Houssaye, A., 37, 81, 88, 93, 127
Huguenots, 280
Hume, D., 159
Huss, John, 59

Jaucourt, —, 251, 272
Jerome of Prague, 59
John of Leyden, 255
Joubert, —, 46
Jully, Remi de, 145

Kaunitz, Comte de, 159

La Barre, —, 294
La Bruyère, —, 121-2, 152, 164, 168 *sqq.*, 177, 184, 191, 234, 265
La Chalotais, —, 123, 133, 181, 214
La Fontaine, —, 171, 200
La Harpe, —, 113, 178, 179, 194
Lainé, —, 113
Lally, —, 137
Lambert, Mme de, 178, 179, 182, 195
Lamoignon, President of, 147
Lanfrey, —, 55, 128, 131
Lanjuinais, J.-D., 292
Larroumet, —, 81
La Tour, —, 159
Lauragnais, Mme de, 74, 76
Lauzun, —, 189
Law, John, 166
Lawfeld, battle of, 37, 38
Ledoux, —, 71
Le Roi, J. A., 95
Le Sage, —, 151, 157, 161, 184
Lescure, M. de, 193
Lespinasse, Mlle de, 179, 195
Lessius, —, 130
Le Tellier, —, 130, 132, 224
Levis, Duc de, 39, 47, 53
Ligneville, Mlle de, 147
Ligonier, General, 38

Linguet, —, 255, 259, 286
Linière, M., 190
Louis XIII., 35
Louis XIV., 28, 29, 30 *sqq.*, 37, 51, 52, 60, 67, 106, 109-10, 113, 148, 167, 192, 210
Louis XV., 28, 30 *sqq.*, 60, 63, 70 *sqq.*, 109 *sqq.*, 144, 149, 175, 211, 221, 230, 242, 243, 263, 288
Louis XVI., 49, 54, 67, 68, 70, 99, 230, 243
Löwendahl, Marquis and Marquise de, 38, 159
Loyola, Ignatius, 132, 214
Loyseau, —, 252
Luciennes, Château de, 71
Luxembourg, Maréchale de, 179
Luxembourg, M. de, 84, 195
Luynes, Duc de, 56, 83, 84, 110
— Duchesse de, 56, 82
Lyons, 138, 229, 232, 237, 239-40

Mably, —, 138
Macaulay, Lord, 111
Machault, Comte de, 89
Mademoiselle, La Grande, 189
Madras, 38
Maestricht, 38
Mailly, Mme de, 72-3, 74, 75, 76, 83
Mainz, Elector of, 159
Mairobert, Pidansat de, 36
Malesherbes, —, 68, 147
Marais, —, 198, 200, 209, 216 *sqq.*
Marat, 249
Marck, Comtesse de la, 84
Maréchal, —, 31
Marie Antoinette, 49, 70
Marie Leczinska, Queen of France, 49, 56, 57, 71 *sqq.*, 82, 178
Marigny, *see* Vandières.
Marivaux, —, 81, 87, 160, 180, 256
Marmontel, —, 81, 85, 141-2, 150, 164, 184, 193, 194, 250-1, 255, 262, 263, 269, 280, 281, 282, 286
Marsan, Durey de, 160
Martin, Henri, 138
Marx, Karl, 250
Massillon, —, 262
Masson, —, 99
Maugras, M., 70
Maupeou, Chancellor, 49, 71, 120, 121, 127, 134, 135-6, 138, 140, 141
Maurepas, —, 195
Maury, —, 176
— Abbé, 178
Mazade, —, 153
Melac, Mlle de, 189
Melon, —, 154
Merchangy, —, 113
Mercier, —, 230-1, 246, 248, 249, 270, 275
Mesdames de France, 97, 99
Mesmes, President, 201
Metz, 34-5, 43, 55 *sqq.*, 57, 76, 146
Meuse, —, de, 85
Mexico, 53
Mirabeau, Marquis de, 59, 65, 104, 122, 155, 162-3, 164, 260
Mirepoix, Mme de, 158, 194
Mirepoix, Royer, Bishop of, 88, 178
Mole, —, 148
Molière, 165, 191, 195
Molinists, 59, 221, 253
Monceau, Billard de, 150
Moncrif, —, 85
Mongault, Abbé, 180
Mons, 37
Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, 236
Montaigne, 105
Montausier, 187
Montbailly, —, 294
Montbard, 192
Montboissier, Collé, Comte de, 179
Montchrestien, —, 192
Montclar, —, de, 123
Montesquieu, —, 61-2, 81, 85, 87, 91, 113, 114, 116 *sqq.*, 120-1, 140, 145, 151 *sqq.*, 178, 184, 191-2, 194, 219, 248, 260, 266, 267, 295
Montesson, Mme de, 95
Montigny, Chevalier Trudaine de, 146, 158
Montluçon, Olivier de, 146, 154, 157
Montmarel, M. de, 164
Montpellier, 145, 146
Montpensier, Mlle de, 18, 235-6
Morellet, Abbé, 134, 141, 154, 155, 193, 194, 218, 225, 281 *sqq.*
Motte, Madeleine de la (Mme Poisson), 79, 83
Muette, Château de la, 70
Muy, Nicolia, Comte de, 57

Namur, 37
Nancy, 41, 160
Naples, 253
Naveau, J. B., 162
Necker, Mme de, 195, 196, 266
Necker, M. de, 260
Nemours, *Cahier de*, 261
Nemours, Dupont de, 259, 260, 261
Nesles, Demoiselles de, 72, 74-5, 83
Neuville, Camus de, 247
Newcastle, Duke of, 38
Nivelet, —, 125
Nivernais, Duc de, 110
Noailles, 37
Noailles, Maréchal de, 35, 76
Noailles, Vicomtesse de, 185

Nogaret, M., 238
Nolhac, P. de, 145
Nord, the, 244
Notre Dame de Paris, 212, 239, 267
Noyon, de Broglie, Bishop of, 262

Oberkirch, Baroness, 149
Olivet, Abbé d', 181
Olonne, Mme d', 190
Orléans, Duc d', 31, 33, 73, 95
Orry, M., 149, 236

Paciaudi, —, 193
Palais Royal, 249
Palissot, —, 161
Palissy, 192
Pan, Mallet du, 58, 249, 260
Pangrapho, Henriques (de Turpin), 162
Panthéon, the, 246, 292, 293
Paparel, —, 166
Parc aux Cerfs, 65, 79
Paris, 30 *sqq.*, 39-40, 50, 203 *sqq.*, 228, 230 *sqq.*, 237, 239-40, 248, 259, 279
Paris, Archbishop of, 212, 213
Paris, *Parlement of*, 116, 120, 127, 131, 135, 136
Pâris, brothers, 144-5, 150, 168
— François de, 213
Paris-Duvernay, —, 166
Pascal, Blaise, 89, 131, 184, 214, 282
Peigne, —, 81
Pelham, —, 38
Pelletier, —, 162, 163
Peru, 53
Physiocrats, 60, 65
Picardy, 235
Pinon, Mme, 199
Piron, —, 87
Pitt, William, 38
Plessis, 222
Plessis, —, de la Porte du, 153, 157
Plisson, Mme, 262
Poinsinet, —, 185
Poissons, the, 79, 83, 164
Pompadour, Mme de, 40, 57, 70, 71, 73, 78 *sqq.*, 100, 144, 150, 158, 164, 166, 288
Pondichéry, 150
Port Royal, 130, 132
Poupelinière, —, Le Riche de la, 146, 150, 157, 166
Prades, Abbé de, 218, 219
Praslin, Duc de, 98
Prévost, Abbé, 85
Proudhon, —, 196, 250
Provence, 242

Quai des Théatins, 279
Quesnay, —, 29, 53, 59, 61, 62, 84, 87, 144, 239, 260
Quesnel, 128

Rabelais, —, 192
Rameau, —, 159
Rastadt, Treaty of, 32
Raucoux, Battle of, 37
Raynal, Abbé, 59, 113, 159, 272
Regnard, —, 157
Regnaud, —, 66, 68, 292
Rennes, 41, 120, 138
Retz, Cardinal, 255
Reynière, Mlle Grimod de la, 147
Reynière, Grimod de la, and his wife, 146, 149, 157
Rheims, 32, 41
Richelieu, Cardinal, 207
Richelieu, Duc de, 30, 33, 45, 48, 49, 76, 84, 85, 119, 134
Rivarol, —, 114
Rivière, Mercier de la, 60-1
Robecq, Princesse de, 84
Robespierre, 277
Rochechouart, Duchesse de, 82-3
Rochefort, Comte de, 137
— Comtesse de, 179
Rochefoucauld, —, de la, 184, 189, 191
Rohan, Abbé de, 179
Rohan, Princesse de, 83, 84, 158
Roland, Mme, 234
Romans, Mlle de, 94
Romilly, 292
Roquencourt, 236
Rosbach, Battle of, 80, 81
Rouen, 232
Rousseau, J.-J., and his books, 93, 112, 113, 140, 158, 159, 192, 194, 196, 219, 248, 249, 250, 251, 258, 260, 266, 273, 291-2
Roux, —, 225
Rue Saint-Médéric, 79

Saint-André, 125
Saint-Benoît, 125
Saint-Cyr, Mlle, 146
Saint-Cyran, Abbé de, 57, 215
Saint-Denis, 30
Saint-Etienne, 232
St Eustache, 240
Saint-Evremond, —, 190
Saint-Foix, M. de, 150-1, 161
St Geneviève, 240, 276, 292
— Montagne de, 246
Saint-Gervais, 125
St Januarius, 253, 254

Saint-Lambert, —, de, 263
Saint-Médard, 126
Saint-Pierre, Abbé de, 27, 158, 274, 277
St Pierre-sur-Dive, 245
Saint-Priest, —, 90
Saint-Sever, 231
Saint-Severin, 124
Saint-Simon, —, 104, 106
St Sulpice, 240
Sainte-Beuve, 251, 254, 280
Salle, T.-B. de la, 243
Salier, Abbé, 158
Sanchez, —, 130
Sartines, M. de, 51
Saurin, —, 159, 163
Saxe, Marshal, Maurice, Comte de, 37, 38, 39, 81, 144-5, 166
Scudéry, Mlle de, 182, 189
Ségaud, Père, 77, 125
Séguier, —, 181
Segur, Comte de, 112, 279
Sellières, 292
Servan, —, 123, 132, 135, 294
Sévigné, Mme de, 192
Sèvres manufactory, 85
Shelburne, Earl of, 141
Sigorgne, M., 222
Silhouette, M., 160
Sismondi, —, 260
Smith, Adam, 260
Soissons, Bishop of, 76, 78
Sorbonne, the, 218
Sorel, Agnès, 75, 76, 90
Soubise, Général, 80, 81, 186
Soury, M., 97, 136
Souvre, Maréchal, 149
Stanislas of Poland, 196
Storch, —, 245
Stormont, Viscount, 196
Suard, J.-B., 159, 163, 193, 226

Tabareau, —, 251, 254
Taine, —, 183, 234, 238, 252
Tencin, Cardinal de, 45
Tencin, M. de, Archbishop of Embrun, 212-13
Tencin, Mme de, 48, 81, 82, 87, 182, 187, 195
Terray, Abbé, 49
Texier, —, 145
Thieriot, —, 263
Thierry, —, 113
Thiard, Marquis, and his wife, 146
Thomas, —, 159, 178, 193
Tocqueville, —, De, 247
Toulouse, 120, 132, 134, 244
Tournehem, Le Normant de, 84, 146, 158
Touraine, 234
Tournelle, Marquise de la, Duchesse de Châteauroux (*q.v.*)
Toussaint, —, 217
Tresmes, Duc de, 96
Tressan, Comte de, 85
Tronchin, —, 195
Trudaine, —, 274
Tuileries, the, 125, 181, 249
Turgot, Jacques, 29-30, 52, 68, 136, 230, 241, 260-1, 291

Valenciennes, 41
Vandières (later Marigny), Marquis de, 84, 91
Vanloo, —, 34
Vaudois, the, 129, 131
Vauguyon, Duc de la, 57, 59, 99
Vauvenargues, Marquis de, 41-2, 65, 66, 114
Venice, Godeau, Bishop of, 187
Ventadour, Mme de, 30
Verdun, Bishop of, 57, 59
Versailles, 36, 39, 43, 70, 71, 79
Villars, Duc de, 71
Villemain, —, 136, 138, 222
Villenave, —, 180
Villette, Mme, 294
Vincennes, 30
Vintimille, Archbishop of, 125
Vintimille, Mme de, 74
Viri, Comte de, 159
Vivonne, Mme de, 182
Voltaire, 29, 42, 52, 57, 64, 65-6, 85, 88, 89, 90, 93, 120-1, 123, 129, 130, 132 *sqq.*, 147-8, 160, 167, 168, 180, 185, 225, 238, 248, 269, 251 *sqq.*, 279, 292 *sqq.*
Vrillière, Duc de la, 48

Walpole, Horace, 58, 238
Warburton, —, 160
Watelet, —, 179

Young, Arthur, 242, 247

Zamore, 71

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